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THE WORKS
OF
SAMUEL JOHNSON

LITERARY CLUB EDITION FROM TYPE

IN SIXTEEN VOLUMES

VOLUME IX

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Painted by T. Lawrence. R.A.

HENRY DUNDAS, VISCOUNT MELVILLE

Works

LIVES OF THE POETS

By SAMUEL JOHNSON

PAFRAETS BOOK COMPANY
TROY NEW YORK

LIBRARY
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WAYNE, NEBRASKA

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
Dryden (Continued.)	1
Smith	54
Duke	83
King	85
Sprat	90
Halifax	97
Parnell	103
Garth	108
Rowe	114
Addison	129
Hughes	203
Sheffield, duke of Buckinghamshire	209
Prior	218
Congreve	246
Blackmore	263
Fenton	287
Gay	297
Granville	311
Yalden	321
Tickell	327
Hammond	333
Somervile	337

57694

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME IX

HENRY DUNDAS, VISCOUNT MELVILLE — FRONTISPIECE
From a painting by T. Lawrence, Esq., R. A.

MRS. LENNOX
From a painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds — *Facing page* 96

JOHN SCOTT, EARL OF ELDON
From a painting by T. Lawrence, Esq., R. A. — *Facing page* 224

THE description of the attempt at Bergen will afford a very complete specimen of the descriptions in this poem:

> And now approach'd their fleet from India, fraught
> With all the riches of the rising sun:
> And precious sand from southern climates brought,
> The fatal regions where the war begun.
>
> Like hunted castors, conscious of their store,
> Their waylaid wealth to Norway's coast they bring:
> Then first the north's cold bosom spices bore,
> And winter brooded on the eastern spring.
>
> By the rich scent we found our perfum'd prey,
> Which, flank'd with rocks, did close in covert lie;
> And round about their murd'ring cannon lay,
> At once to threaten and invite the eye.
>
> Fiercer than cannon, and than rocks more hard,
> The English undertake th' unequal war;
> Sev'n ships alone, by which the port is barr'd,
> Besiege the Indies, and all Denmark dare.
>
> These fight like husbands, but like lovers those;
> These fain would keep, and those more fain enjoy;
> And to such height their frantick passion grows,
> That what both love, both hazard to destroy:
>
> Amidst whole heaps of spices lights a ball,
> And now their odours arm'd against them fly:
> Some preciously by shatter'd porc'lain fall,
> And some by aromatick splinters die.
>
> And though by tempests of the prize bereft,
> In heav'n's inclemency some ease we find;
> Our foes we vanquish'd by our valour left,
> And only yielded to the seas and wind.

In this manner is the sublime too often mingled with the ridiculous. The Dutch seek a shelter for a wealthy fleet: this, surely, needed no illustration; yet they must fly, not like all the rest of mankind

on the same occasion, but "like hunted castors;" and they might with strict propriety be hunted; for we winded them by our noses — their *perfumes* betrayed them. The *husband* and the *lover*, though of more dignity than the castor, are images too domestick to mingle properly with the horrours of war. The two quatrains that follow are worthy of the author.

The account of the different sensations with which the two fleets retired, when the night parted them, is one of the fairest flowers of English poetry:

> The night comes on, we eager to pursue
> The combat still, and they asham'd to leave:
> Till the last streaks of dying day withdrew,
> And doubtful moonlight did our rage deceive.
>
> In th' English fleet each ship resounds with joy,
> And loud applause of their great leader's fame:
> In fiery dreams the Dutch they still destroy,
> And, slumb'ring, smile at the imagin'd flame.
>
> Not so the Holland fleet, who, tir'd and done,
> Stretch'd on their decks like weary oxen lie;
> Faint sweats all down their mighty members run,
> (Vast bulks, which little souls but ill supply.)
>
> In dreams they fearful precipices tread,
> Or, shipwreck'd, labour to some distant shore;
> Or, in dark churches, walk among the dead:
> They wake with horrour, and dare sleep no more.

It is a general rule in poetry, that all appropriated terms of art should be sunk in general expressions, because poetry is to speak an universal language. This rule is still stronger with regard to arts not liberal, or confined to few, and, therefore, far removed from common knowledge and of this kind,

certainly, is technical navigation. Yet Dryden was of opinion, that a seafight ought to be described in the nautical language; "and certainly," says he, "as those, who in a logical disputation keep to general terms, would hide a fallacy, so those who do it in any poetical description would veil their ignorance."

Let us then appeal to experience; for by experience, at last, we learn as well what will please as what will profit. In the battle, his terms seem to have been blown away; but he deals them liberally in the dock:

> So here some pick out bullets from the side,
> Some drive old *okum* through each *seam* and rift;
> Their left hand does the *calking-iron* guide,
> The rattling *mallet* with the right they lift.
>
> With boiling pitch another near at hand
> (From friendly Sweden brought) the *seams in-stops:*
> Which, well-laid o'er, the salt sea-waves withstand,
> And shake them from the rising beak in drops.
>
> Some the *gall'd* ropes with dauby *marling* bind,
> Or sear-cloth masts with strong *tarpawling* coats;
> To try new *shrouds* one mounts into the wind,
> And one below, their ease or stiffness notes.

I suppose there is not one term which every reader does not wish away[a].

[a] We are not about to attempt a justification of Dryden's strange use, in the above stanzas, of nautical phrases, but we must remark, that Johnson's antipathy to ships, and every thing connected with them, made him unusually sensitive of any thing like naval technicalities. And yet surely the occasional and judicious use of them in description is quite as allowable as the introduction of allusions to the printing office or bookseller's shop, with which Johnson happened to be familiar, and, therefore, did not disapprove. St. Paul did not disdain to adopt naval phraseology in his exquisite narrative of his own perils by sea. Ed.

His digression to the original and progress of navigation, with his prospect of the advancement which it shall receive from the Royal Society, then newly instituted, may be considered as an example seldom equalled of seasonable excursion and artful return.

One line, however, leaves me discontented; he says, that, by the help of the philosophers,

> Instructed ships shall sail to quick commerce,
> By which remotest regions are allied.

Which he is constrained to explain in a note "by a more exact measure of longitude." It had better become Dryden's learning and genius to have laboured science into poetry, and have shown, by explaining longitude, that verse did not refuse the ideas of philosophy.

His description of the Fire is painted by resolute meditation, out of a mind better formed to reason than to feel. The conflagration of a city, with all its tumults of concomitant distress, is one of the most dreadful spectacles which this world can offer to human eyes; yet it seems to raise little emotion in the breast of the poet; he watches the flame coolly from street to street, with now a reflection, and now a simile, till at last he meets the king, for whom he makes a speech, rather tedious in a time so busy; and then follows again the progress of the fire.

There are, however, in this part some passages that deserve attention; as in the beginning:

> The diligence of trades and noiseful gain,
> And luxury, more late, asleep were laid;
> All was the night's, and in her silent reign
> No sound the rest of nature did invade
> In this deep quiet——

The expression, "all was the night's," is taken from Seneca, who remarks on Virgil's line,

> Omnia noctis erant, placida composta quiete,

that he might have concluded better,

> Omnia noctis erant.

The following quatrain is vigorous and animated:

> The ghosts of traitors from the bridge descend,
> With bold fanatick spectres to rejoice;
> About the fire into a dance they bend,
> And sing their sabbath notes with feeble voice.

His prediction of the improvements which shall be made in the new city is elegant and poetical, and, with an event which poets cannot always boast, has been happily verified. The poem concludes with a simile that might have better been omitted.

Dryden, when he wrote this poem, seems not yet fully to have formed his versification, or settled his system of propriety.

From this time he addicted himself almost wholly to the stage, "to which," says he, "my genius never much inclined me," merely as the most profitable market for poetry. By writing tragedies in rhyme, he continued to improve his diction and his numbers. According to the opinion of Harte, who had studied his works with great attention, he settled his principles of versification in 1676, when he produced the play of Aureng Zebe; and, according to his own account of the short time in which he wrote Tyrannick Love, and the State of Innocence, he soon obtained the full effect of diligence, and added facility to exactness.

Rhyme has been so long banished from the theatre, that we know not its effect upon the passions of an audience; but it has this convenience, that sentences stand more independent on each other, and striking passages are, therefore, easily selected and retained. Thus the description of night in the Indian Emperor, and the rise and fall of empire in the Conquest of Granada, are more frequently repeated than any lines in All for Love, or Don Sebastian.

To search his plays for vigorous sallies and sententious elegancies, or to fix the dates of any little pieces which he wrote by chance, or by solicitation, were labour too tedious and minute.

His dramatick labours did not so wholly absorb his thoughts, but that he promulgated the laws of translation in a preface to the English Epistles of Ovid; one of which he translated himself, and another in conjunction with the earl of Mulgrave.

Absalom and Achitophel is a work so well known, that particular criticism is superfluous. If it be considered as a poem political and controversial, it will be found to comprise all the excellencies of which the subject is susceptible; acrimony of censure, elegance of praise, artful delineation of characters, variety and vigour of sentiment, happy turns of language, and pleasing harmony of numbers; and all these raised to such a height as can scarcely be found in any other English composition.

It is not, however, without faults; some lines are inelegant or improper, and too many are irreligiously licentious. The original structure of the poem

was defective; allegories drawn to great length will always break; Charles could not run continually parallel with David.

The subject had likewise another inconvenience; it admitted little imagery or description; and a long poem of mere sentiments easily becomes tedious; though all the parts are forcible, and every line kindles new rapture, the reader, if not relieved by the interposition of something that sooths the fancy, grows weary of admiration, and defers the rest.

As an approach to historical truth was necessary, the action and catastrophe were not in the poet's power; there is, therefore, an unpleasing disproportion between the beginning and the end. We are alarmed by a faction formed out of many sects various in their principles, but agreeing in their purpose of mischief, formidable for their numbers, and strong by their supports, while the king's friends are few and weak. The chiefs on either part are set forth to view; but when expectation is at the height, the king makes a speech, and

> Henceforth a series of new times began.

Who can forbear to think of an enchanted castle, with a wide moat and lofty battlements, walls of marble and gates of brass, which vanishes at once into air, when the destined knight blows his horn before it?

In the second part, written by Tate, there is a long insertion, which, for poignancy of satire, exceeds any part of the former. Personal resentment,

though no laudable motive to satire, can add great force to general principles. Self-love is a busy prompter.

The Medal, written upon the same principles with Absalom and Achitophel, but upon a narrower plan, gives less pleasure, though it discovers equal abilities in the writer. The superstructure cannot extend beyond the foundation; a single character or incident cannot furnish as many ideas, as a series of events, or multiplicity of agents. This poem, therefore, since time has left it to itself, is not much read, nor, perhaps, generally understood; yet it abounds with touches both of humorous and serious satire. The picture of a man whose propensions to mischief are such, that his best actions are but inability of wickedness, is very skilfully delineated and strongly coloured.

> Power was his aim; but, thrown from that pretence,
> The wretch turn'd loyal in his own defence,
> And malice reconcil'd him to his prince.
> Him, in the anguish of his soul, he serv'd;
> Rewarded faster still than he deserv'd:
> Behold him now exalted into trust;
> His counsels oft convenient, seldom just.
> Ev'n in the most sincere advice he gave,
> He had a grudging still to be a knave.
> The frauds he learnt in his fanatick years,
> Made him uneasy in his lawful gears:
> At least as little honest as he could;
> And, like white witches, mischievously good.
> To this first bias, longingly he leans;
> And rather would be great by wicked means.

The Threnodia, which, by a term I am afraid neither authorized nor analogical, he calls Augus-

talis, is not among his happiest productions. Its first and obvious defect is the irregularity of its metre, to which the ears of that age, however, were accustomed. What is worse, it has neither tenderness nor dignity; it is neither magnificent nor pathetick. He seems to look round him for images which he cannot find, and what he has he distorts by endeavouring to enlarge them. "He is," he says, "petrified with grief;" but the marble sometimes relents, and trickles in a joke:

> The sons of art all med'cines try'd,
> And ev'ry noble remedy apply'd:
> With emulation each essay'd
> His utmost skill; *nay, more, they pray'd;*
> Was never losing game with better conduct play'd.

He had been a little inclined to merriment before upon the prayers of a nation for their dying sovereign; nor was he serious enough to keep heathen fables out of his religion:

> With him th' innumerable crowd of armed prayers
> Knock'd at the gates of heav'n, and knock'd aloud;
> *The first well-meaning rude petitioners*
> All for his life assail'd the throne;
> All would have brib'd the skies by off'ring up their own.
> So great a throng not heav'n itself could bar;
> 'Twas almost borne by force, *as in the giants' war.*
> The pray'rs, at least, for his reprieve were heard:
> His death, like Hezekiah's, was deferr'd.

There is, throughout the composition, a desire of splendour without wealth. In the conclusion he seems too much pleased with the prospect of the new reign to have lamented his old master with much sincerity.

He did not miscarry in this attempt for want of skill either in lyrick or elegiack poetry. His poem on the death of Mrs. Killigrew is, undoubtedly, the noblest ode that our language ever has produced. The first part flows with a torrent of enthusiasm: "Fervet immensusque ruit." All the stanzas, indeed, are not equal. An imperial crown cannot be one continued diamond; the gems must be held together by some less valuable matter.

In his first ode for Cecilia's day, which is lost in the splendour of the second, there are passages which would have dignified any other poet. The first stanza is vigorous and elegant, though the word *diapason* is too technical, and the rhymes are too remote from one another:

> From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
> This universal frame began:
> When nature underneath a heap of jarring atoms lay,
> And could not heave her head,
> The tuneful voice was heard from high,
> Arise, ye more than dead.
>
> Then cold and hot, and moist and dry,
> In order to their stations leap,
> And musick's power obey.
> From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
> This universal frame began;
> From harmony to harmony
> Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
> The diapason closing full in man.

The conclusion is likewise striking; but it includes an image so awful in itself, that it can owe little to poetry; and I could wish the antithesis of *musick untuning* had found some other place:

> As from the power of sacred lays
> The spheres began to move,

And sung the great creator's praise
To all the bless'd above:

So, when the last and dreadful hour
This crumbling pageant shall devour,
The trumpet shall be heard on high,
The dead shall live, the living die,
And musick shall untune the sky.

Of his skill in elegy he has given a specimen in his Eleonora, of which the following lines discover their author:

Though all these rare endowments of the mind
Were in a narrow space of life confin'd,
The figure was with full perfection crown'd;
Though not so large an orb, as truly round:
As when in glory, through the publick place,
The spoils of conquer'd nations were to pass,
And but one day for triumph was allow'd,
The consul was constrain'd his pomp to crowd;
And so the swift procession hurry'd on,
That all, tho' not distinctly, might be shown;
So, in the straiten'd bounds of life confin'd,
She gave but glimpses of her glorious mind:
And multitudes of virtues pass'd along;
Each pressing foremost in the mighty throng,
Ambitious to be seen, and then make room
For greater multitudes that were to come.
Yet unemploy'd no minute slipp'd away;
Moments were precious in so short a stay.
The haste of heaven to have her was so great,
That some were single acts, though each complete;
And ev'ry act stood ready to repeat.

This piece, however, is not without its faults; there is so much likeness in the initial comparison, that there is no illustration. As a king would be lamented, Eleonora was lamented:

As, when some great and gracious monarch dies,
Soft whispers, first, and mournful murmurs rise
Among the sad attendants; then the sound
Soon gathers voice, and spreads the news around,

> Through town and country, till the dreadful blast
> Is blown to distant colonies at last;
> Who then, perhaps, were off'ring vows in vain,
> For his long life, and for his happy reign:
> So slowly, by degrees, unwilling fame
> Did matchless Eleonora's fate proclaim,
> Till publick as the loss the news became.

This is little better than to say in praise of a shrub, that it is as green as a tree; or of a brook, that it waters a garden, as a river waters a country.

Dryden confesses that he did not know the lady whom he celebrates: the praise being, therefore, inevitably general, fixes no impression upon the reader, nor excites any tendency to love, nor much desire of imitation. Knowledge of the subject is to the poet what durable materials are to the architect.

The Religio Laici, which borrows its title from the Religio Medici of Browne, is almost the only work of Dryden which can be considered as a voluntary effusion; in this, therefore, it might be hoped, that the full effulgence of his genius would be found. But, unhappily, the subject is rather argumentative than poetical; he intended only a specimen of metrical disputation:

> And this unpolish'd rugged verse I chose
> As fittest for discourse, and nearest prose.

This, however, is a composition of great excellence in its kind, in which the familiar is very properly diversified with the solemn, and the grave with the humorous; in which metre has neither weakened the force, nor clouded the perspicuity of argument; nor will it be easy to find another example equally

happy of this middle kind of writing, which, though prosaick in some parts, rises to high poetry in others, and neither towers to the skies, nor creeps along the ground.

Of the same kind, or not far distant from it, is the Hind and Panther, the longest of all Dryden's original poems; an allegory intended to comprise and to decide the controversy between the Romanists and protestants. The scheme of the work is injudicious and incommodious; for what can be more absurd, than that one beast should counsel another to rest her faith upon a pope and council? He seems well enough skilled in the usual topicks of argument, endeavours to show the necessity of an infallible judge, and reproaches the reformers with want of unity; but is weak enough to ask, why, since we see without knowing how, we may not have an infallible judge without knowing where?

The hind, at one time, is afraid to drink at the common brook, because she may be worried; but, walking home with the panther, talks by the way of the Nicene fathers, and at last declares herself to be the catholick church.

This absurdity was very properly ridiculed in the City Mouse and Country Mouse of Montague and Prior; and, in the detection and censure of the incongruity of the fiction, chiefly consists the value of their performance, which, whatever reputation it might obtain by the help of temporary passions, seems, to readers almost a century distant, not very forcible or animated.

Pope, whose judgment was, perhaps, a little bribed by the subject, used to mention this poem as the most correct specimen of Dryden's versification. It was, indeed, written when he had completely formed his manner, and may be supposed to exhibit, negligence excepted, his deliberate and ultimate scheme of metre.

We may, therefore, reasonably infer, that he did not approve the perpetual uniformity which confines the sense to couplets, since he has broken his lines in the initial paragraph:

> A milk-white hind, immortal and unchang'd,
> Fed on the lawns, and in the forest rang'd:
> Without unspotted, innocent within,
> She fear'd no danger, for she knew no sin.
> Yet had she oft been chas'd with horns and hounds,
> And Scythian shafts, and many winged wounds
> Aim'd at her heart; was often forc'd to fly,
> And doom'd to death, though fated not to die.

These lines are lofty, elegant, and musical, notwithstanding the interruption of the pause, of which the effect is rather increase of pleasure by variety, than offence by ruggedness.

To the first part it was his intention, he says, "to give the majestick turn of heroick poesy;" and, perhaps, he might have executed his design not unsuccessfully, had not an opportunity of satire, which he cannot forbear, fallen sometimes in his way. The character of a presbyterian, whose emblem is the wolf, is not very heroically majestick:

> More haughty than the rest, the wolfish race
> Appear with belly gaunt and famish'd face:
> Never was so deform'd a beast of grace.

His ragged tail betwixt his legs he wears,
Close clapp'd for shame; but his rough crest he rears,
And pricks up his predestinating ears.

His general character of the other sorts of beasts that never go to church, though sprightly and keen, has, however, not much of heroick poesy:

These are the chief; to number o'er the rest,
And stand like Adam naming ev'ry beast,
Were weary work; nor will the muse describe
A slimy-born, and sun-begotten tribe,
Who, far from steeples and their sacred sound,
In fields their sullen conventicles found.
These gross, half-animated lumps I leave;
Nor can I think what thoughts they can conceive;
But, if they think at all, 'tis sure no higher
Than matter, put in motion, may aspire;
Souls that can scarce ferment their mass of clay,
So drossy, so divisible are they,
As would but serve pure bodies for allay:
Such souls as shards produce, such beetle things
As only buzz to heaven with evening wings;
Strike in the dark, offending but by chance;
Such are the blindfold blows of ignorance.
They know no being, and but hate a name;
To them the hind and panther are the same.

One more instance, and that taken from the narrative part, where style was more in his choice, will show how steadily he kept his resolution of heroick dignity:

For when the herd, suffic'd, did late repair
To ferny heaths and to their forest lair,
She made a mannerly excuse to stay,
Proff'ring the hind to wait her half the way;
That, since the sky was clear, an hour of talk
Might help her to beguile the tedious walk.
With much good-will the motion was embrac'd,
To chat awhile on their adventures past:
Nor had the grateful hind so soon forgot
Her friend and fellow-suff'rer in the plot.

Yet, wond'ring how of late she grew estrang'd,
Her forehead cloudy and her count'nance chang'd,
She thought this hour th' occasion would present
To learn her secret cause of discontent,
Which well she hop'd might be with ease redress'd,
Consid'ring her a well-bred civil beast,
And more a gentlewoman than the rest.
After some common talk what rumours ran,
The lady of the spotted muff began.

The second and third parts he professes to have reduced to diction more familiar and more suitable to dispute and conversation; the difference is not, however, very easily perceived; the first has familiar, and the two others have sonorous, lines. The original incongruity runs through the whole: the king is now Cæsar, and now the Lion; and the name Pan is given to the supreme being.

But when this constitutional absurdity is forgiven, the poem must be confessed to be written with great smoothness of metre, a wide extent of knowledge, and an abundant multiplicity of images; the controversy is embellished with pointed sentences, diversified by illustrations, and enlivened by sallies of invective. Some of the facts to which allusions are made are now become obscure, and, perhaps, there may be many satirical passages little understood.

As it was by its nature a work of defiance, a composition which would naturally be examined with the utmost acrimony of criticism, it was probably laboured with uncommon attention; and there are, indeed, few negligencies in the subordinate parts. The original impropriety, and the subsequent un-

popularity of the subject, added to the ridiculousness of its first elements, has sunk it into neglect; but it may be usefully studied, as an example of poetical ratiocination, in which the argument suffers little from the metre.

In the poem on the Birth of the Prince of Wales, nothing is very remarkable but the exorbitant adulation, and that insensibility of the precipice on which the king was then standing, which the laureate apparently shared with the rest of the courtiers. A few months cured him of controversy, dismissed him from court, and made him again a playwright and translator.

Of Juvenal there had been a translation by Stapylton, and another by Holiday; neither of them is very poetical. Stapylton is more smooth; and Holiday's is more esteemed for the learning of his notes. A new version was proposed to the poets of that time, and undertaken by them in conjunction. The main design was conducted by Dryden, whose reputation was such that no man was unwilling to serve the muses under him.

The general character of this translation will be given, when it is said to preserve the wit, but to want the dignity of the original. The peculiarity of Juvenal is a mixture of gaiety and stateliness, of pointed sentences and declamatory grandeur. His points have not been neglected; but his grandeur none of the band seemed to consider as necessary to be imitated, except Creech, who undertook the thirteenth satire. It is, therefore, perhaps, possible

to give a better representation of that great satirist, even in those parts which Dryden himself has translated, some passages excepted, which will never be excelled.

With Juvenal was published Persius, translated wholly by Dryden. This work, though like all the other productions of Dryden it may have shining parts, seems to have been written merely for wages, in an uniform mediocrity, without any eager endeavour after excellence, or laborious effort of the mind.

There wanders an opinion among the readers of poetry, that one of these satires is an exercise of the school. Dryden says, that he once translated it at school; but not that he preserved or published the juvenile performance.

Not long afterwards he undertook, perhaps, the most arduous work of its kind, a translation of Virgil, for which he had shown how well he was qualified, by his version of the Pollio, and two episodes, one of Nisus and Euryalus, the other of Mezentius and Lausus.

In the comparison of Homer and Virgil, the discriminative excellence of Homer is elevation and comprehension of thought, and that of Virgil is grace and splendour of diction. The beauties of Homer are, therefore, difficult to be lost, and those of Virgil difficult to be retained. The massy trunk of sentiment is safe by its solidity, but the blossoms of elocution easily drop away. The author, having the choice of his own images, selects those which

he can best adorn; the translator must, at all hazards, follow his original, and express thoughts which, perhaps, he would not have chosen. When to this primary difficulty is added the inconvenience of a language so much inferiour in harmony to the Latin, it cannot be expected that they who read the Georgicks and the Æneid should be much delighted with any version.

All these obstacles Dryden saw, and all these he determined to encounter. The expectation of his work was undoubtedly great; the nation considered its honour as interested in the event. One gave him the different editions of his author, and another helped him in the subordinate parts. The arguments of the several books were given him by Addison.

The hopes of the publick were not disappointed. He produced, says Pope, "the most noble and spirited translation that I know in any language." It certainly excelled whatever had appeared in English, and appears to have satisfied his friends, and, for the most part, to have silenced his enemies. Milbourne, indeed, a clergyman, attacked it; but his outrages seem to be the ebullitions of a mind agitated by stronger resentment than bad poetry can excite, and previously resolved not to be pleased.

His criticism extends only to the Preface, Pastorals, and Georgicks; and, as he professes to give his antagonist an opportunity of reprisal, he has added his own version of the first and fourth Pastorals, and the first Georgick. The world has forgotten his book; but, since his attempt has given him

a place in literary history, I will preserve a specimen of his criticism, by inserting his remarks on the invocation before the first Georgick, and of his poetry, by annexing his own version.

Ver. 1

"What makes a plenteous harvest, when to turn
The fruitful soil, and when to sow the corn.

"It's *unlucky*, they say, *to stumble at the threshold:* but what has a *plenteous harvest* to do here? Virgil would not pretend to prescribe *rules* for *that* which depends not on the *husbandman's* care, but the *disposition of heaven* altogether. Indeed, the *plenteous crop* depends somewhat on the *good method of tillage;* and where the *land's* ill-manur'd, the *corn*, without a miracle, can be but *indifferent;* but the *harvest* may be *good*, which is its *properest* epithet, tho' the *husbandman's skill* were never so *indifferent.* The next *sentence* is *too literal:* and *when to plough* had been *Virgil's* meaning, and intelligible to every body; and *when to sow the corn*, is a needless *addition.*

Ver. 3

"The care of sheep, of oxen, and of kine,
And when to geld the lambs, and shear the swine,

"would as well have fallen under the *cura boum, qui cultus habendo sit pecori*, as Mr. D.'s *deduction* of particulars.

Ver. 5

"The birth and genius of the frugal bee
I sing, Mæcenas, and I sing to thee.

"But where did *experientia* ever signify *birth and genius?* or what ground was there for such a *figure*

in this place? How much more manly is Mr. Ogylby's version?

"What makes rich grounds, in what celestial signs
'Tis good to plough, and marry elms with vines:
What best fits cattle, what with sheep agrees,
And several arts improving frugal bees;
I sing, Mæcenas.

"Which four lines, though faulty enough, are yet much more to the purpose than Mr. D.'s six.

Ver. 22
"From fields and mountains to my song repair.

"For *patrium linquens nemus, saltusque Lycœi*— Very well explained!

Ver. 23, 24
"Inventor Pallas, of the fatt'ning oil,
Thou founder of the plough, and ploughman's toil!

"Written as if *these* had been *Pallas's invention.* The *ploughman's toil's* impertinent.

Ver. 25
"The shroud-like cypress———

"Why *shroud-like?* Is a *cypress* pulled up by the *roots*, which the *sculpture* in the *last Eclogue* fills *Silvanus's* hand with, so very like a *shroud?* Or did not Mr. D. think of that kind of *cypress* used often for *scarves and hatbands*, at funerals formerly, or for *widows' veils*, &c.? If so, 'twas a *deep, good thought.*

Ver. 26
"That wear
The royal honours, and increase the year.

"What's meant by *increasing the year?* Did the *gods* or *goddesses* add more *months*, or *days*, or *hours*,

to it? Or how can *arva tueri* signify to *wear rural honours?* Is this to *translate*, or *abuse* an *author?* The next *couplet* is borrowed from Ogylby, I suppose, because *less to the purpose* than ordinary.

Ver. 33

"The patron of the world, and Rome's peculiar guard.

"*Idle*, and none of Virgil's, no more than the sense of the *precedent couplet;* so again, *he interpolates Virgil* with that and *the round circle of the year to guide powerful of blessings, which thou strew'st around;* a ridiculous *Latinism*, and an *impertinent addition;* indeed the whole *period* is but one piece of *absurdity* and *nonsense*, as those who lay it with the *original* must find.

Ver. 42, 43

"And Neptune shall resign the fasces of the sea.

"Was he *consul* or *dictator* there?

"And wat'ry virgins for thy bed shall strive.

"Both absurd *interpolations.*"

Ver. 47, 48

"Where in the void of heaven a place is free.
"*Ah, happy* D———n, *were* that place *for thee!*

"But where is *that void?* Or, what does our *translator* mean by it? He knows what Ovid says *God* did to prevent such a *void* in heaven; perhaps this was then forgotten: but Virgil talks more sensibly.

Ver. 49

"The scorpion ready to receive thy laws.

"No, he would not then have *gotten out of his way* so fast.

Ver. 56

"Though Proserpine affects her silent seat.

"What made *her* then so *angry* with *Ascalaphus*, for preventing her return? She was now mus'd to *Patience* under the *determinations of Fate*, rather than *fond* of her *residence*.

Ver. 61, 62, 63

"Pity the poet's and the ploughman's cares,
Interest thy greatness in our mean affairs,
And use thyself betimes to hear our prayers.

"Which is such a wretched *perversion* of Virgil's *noble thought* as Vicars would have blushed at; but Mr. Ogylby makes us some amends, by his better lines:

"O, wheresoe'er thou art, from thence incline,
And grant assistance to my bold design!
Pity, with me, poor husbandmen's affairs,
And now, as if translated, hear our prayers.

"This is *sense*, and *to the purpose:* the other, poor *mistaken stuff*."

Such were the strictures of Milbourne, who found few abetters, and of whom it may be reasonably imagined, that many who favoured his design were ashamed of his insolence.

When admiration had subsided, the translation was more coolly examined, and found, like all others, to be sometimes erroneous, and sometimes licentious. Those who could find faults, thought they could avoid them; and Dr. Brady attempted, in blank verse, a translation of the Æneid, which, when dragged into the world, did not live long enough to cry. I have never seen it; but that such a version

there is, or has been, perhaps some old catalogue informed me.

With not much better success, Trapp, when his Tragedy and his Prelections had given him reputation, attempted another blank version of the Æneid; to which, notwithstanding the slight regard with which it was treated, he had afterwards perseverance enough to add the Eclogues and Georgicks. His book may continue its existence as long as it is the clandestine refuge of schoolboys.

Since the English ear has been accustomed to the mellifluence of Pope's numbers, and the diction of poetry has become more splendid, new attempts have been made to translate Virgil; and all his works have been attempted by men better qualified to contend with Dryden. I will not engage myself in an invidious comparison by opposing one passage to another; a work of which there would be no end, and which might be often offensive without use.

It is not by comparing line with line, that the merit of great works is to be estimated, but by their general effects and ultimate result. It is easy to note a weak line, and write one more vigorous in its place; to find a happiness of expression in the original, and transplant it by force into the version: but what is given to the parts may be subducted from the whole, and the reader may be weary, though the critick may commend. Works of imagination excel by their allurement and delight; by their power of attracting and detaining the attention. That book is good in vain, which the reader throws away. He

only is the master, who keeps the mind in pleasing captivity; whose pages are perused with eagerness, and in hope of new pleasure are perused again; and whose conclusion is perceived with an eye of sorrow, such as the traveller casts upon departing day[b].

By his proportion of this predomination I will consent that Dryden should be tried; of this, which, in opposition to reason, makes Ariosto the darling and the pride of Italy; of this, which, in defiance of criticism, continues Shakespeare the sovereign of the drama.

His last work was his Fables, in which he gave us the first example of a mode of writing, which the Italians call *refaccimento*, a renovation of ancient writers, by modernizing their language. Thus the old poem of Boiardo has been new dressed by Domenichi and Berni. The works of Chaucer, upon which this kind of rejuvenescence has been bestowed by Dryden, require little criticism. The tale of the Cock seems hardly worth revival; and the story of Palamon and Arcite, containing an action unsuitable to the times in which it is placed, can hardly be suffered to pass without censure of the hyperbolical commendation which Dryden has given it in the general preface, and in a poetical dedication, a piece where his original fondness of remote conceits seems to have revived.

Of the three pieces borrowed from Boccace, Sigismunda may be defended by the celebrity of the

[b] A heart-sinking and painful depression has been experienced by most of us on concluding a favourite author; but the sensation has never been more vividly portrayed in language, than in the above passage. Ed.

story. Theodore and Honoria, though it contains not much moral, yet afforded opportunities of striking description. And Cymon was formerly a tale of such reputation, that, at the revival of letters, it was translated into Latin by one of the Beroalds.

Whatever subjects employed his pen, he was still improving our measures and embellishing our language.

In this volume are interspersed some short original poems, which, with his prologues, epilogues, and songs, may be comprised in Congreve's remark, that even those, if he had written nothing else, would have entitled him to the praise of excellence in his kind.

One composition must, however, be distinguished. The ode for St. Cecilia's Day, perhaps the last effort of his poetry, has been always considered as exhibiting the highest flight of fancy, and the exactest nicety of art. This is allowed to stand without a rival. If, indeed, there is any excellence beyond it, in some other of Dryden's works, that excellence must be found. Compared with the ode on Killigrew, it may be pronounced, perhaps, superiour in the whole; but without any single part equal to the first stanza of the other.

It is said to have cost Dryden a fortnight's labour; but it does not want its negligences: some of the lines are without correspondent rhymes; a defect, which I never detected, but after an acquaintance of many years, and which the enthusiasm of the writer might hinder him from perceiving.

His last stanza has less emotion than the former; but it is not less elegant in the diction. The conclusion is vitious; the musick of Timotheus, which "raised a mortal to the skies," had only a metaphorical power; that of Cecilia, which "drew an angel down," had a real effect: the crown, therefore, could not reasonably be divided.

In a general survey of Dryden's labours, he appears to have a mind very comprehensive by nature, and much enriched with acquired knowledge. His compositions are the effects of a vigorous genius operating upon large materials.

The power that predominated in his intellectual operations, was rather strong reason than quick sensibility. Upon all occasions that were presented, he studied rather than felt, and produced sentiments not such as nature enforces, but meditation supplies. With the simple and elemental passions, as they spring separate in the mind, he seems not much acquainted; and seldom describes them but as they are complicated by the various relations of society, and confused in the tumults and agitations of life.

What he says of love may contribute to the explanation of his character:

> Love various minds does variously inspire;
> It stirs in gentle bosoms gentle fire,
> Like that of incense on the altar laid;
> But raging flames tempestuous souls invade:
> A fire which ev'ry windy passion blows,
> With pride it mounts, or with revenge it glows.

Dryden's was not one of the "gentle bosoms:" love, as it subsists in itself, with no tendency but to

the person loved, and wishing only for correspondent kindness; such love as shuts out all other interest; the love of the golden age, was too soft and subtile to put his faculties in motion. He hardly conceived it but in its turbulent effervescence with some other desires; when it was inflamed by rivalry, or obstructed by difficulties: when it invigorated ambition, or exasperated revenge.

He is, therefore, with all his variety of excellence, not often pathetick; and had so little sensibility of the power of effusions purely natural, that he did not esteem them in others. Simplicity gave him no pleasure; and, for the first part of his life, he looked on Otway with contempt, though, at last, indeed very late, he confessed that in his play "there was nature, which is the chief beauty."

We do not always know our own motives. I am not certain whether it was not rather the difficulty which he found in exhibiting the genuine operations of the heart, than a servile submission to an injudicious audience, that filled his plays with false magnificence. It was necessary to fix attention; and the mind can be captivated only by recollection, or by curiosity; by reviving natural sentiments, or impressing new appearances of things. Sentences were readier at his call than images; he could more easily fill the ear with some splendid novelty, than awaken those ideas that slumber in the heart.

The favourite exercise of his mind was ratiocination; and, that argument might not be too soon at an end, he delighted to talk of liberty and necessity,

destiny and contingence; these he discusses in the language of the school with so much profundity, that the terms which he uses are not always understood. It is, indeed, learning, but learning out of place.

When once he had engaged himself in disputation, thoughts flowed in on either side: he was now no longer at a loss; he had always objections and solutions at command; "verbaque provisam rem" —give him matter for his verse, and he finds, without difficulty, verse for his matter.

In comedy, for which he professes himself not naturally qualified, the mirth which he excites will, perhaps, not be found so much to arise from any original humour, or peculiarity of character nicely distinguished and diligently pursued, as from incidents and circumstances, artifices and surprises; from jests of action rather than of sentiment. What he had of humorous or passionate, he seems to have had not from nature, but from other poets; if not always as a plagiary, at least as an imitator.

Next to argument, his delight was in wild and daring sallies of sentiment, in the irregular and eccentrick violence of wit. He delighted to tread upon the brink of meaning, where light and darkness begin to mingle; to approach the precipice of absurdity, and hover over the abyss of unideal vacancy. This inclination sometimes produced nonsense, which he knew; as,

> Move swiftly, sun, and fly a lover's pace,
> Leave weeks and months behind thee in thy race.
> Amamel flies
> To guard thee from the demons of the air;

My flaming sword above them to display,
All keen, and ground upon the edge of day.

And sometimes it issued in absurdities, of which, perhaps, he was not conscious:

Then we upon our orb's last verge shall go,
And see the ocean leaning on the sky;
From thence our rolling neighbours we shall know,
And on the lunar world securely pry.

These lines have no meaning; but may we not say, in imitation of Cowley on another book,

'Tis so like *sense* 'twill serve the turn as well?

This endeavour after the grand and the new, produced many sentiments either great or bulky, and many images either just or splendid:

I am as free as nature first made man,
Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in woods the noble savage ran.

—'Tis but because the living death ne'er knew,
They fear to prove it, as a thing that's new:
Let me th' experiment before you try,
I'll show you first how easy 'tis to die.

—There with a forest of their darts he strove,
And stood like Capaneus defying Jove,
With his broad sword the boldest beating down,
While fate grew pale, lest he should win the town,
And turn'd the iron leaves of his dark book
To make new dooms, or mend what it mistook.

—I beg no pity for this mouldering clay;
For if you give it burial, there it takes
Possession of your earth;
If burnt, and scatter'd in the air, the winds
That strew my dust diffuse my royalty,
And spread me o'er your clime; for where one atom
Of mine shall light, know there Sebastian reigns.

Of these quotations the two first may be allowed to be great, the two latter only tumid.

Of such selection there is no end. I will add only a few more passages; of which the first, though it may, perhaps, not be quite clear in prose, is not too obscure for poetry, as the meaning that it has is noble[c]:

> No, there is a necessity in fate,
> Why still the brave bold man is fortunate;
> He keeps his object ever full in sight;
> And that assurance holds him firm and right;
> True, 'tis a narrow way that leads to bliss,
> But right before there is no precipice;
> Fear makes men look aside, and so their footing miss.

Of the images which the two following citations afford, the first is elegant, the second magnificent; whether either be just; let the reader judge:

> What precious drops are these,
> Which silently each other's track pursue,
> Bright as young diamonds in their infant dew?
>
> Resign your castle——
> —Enter, brave sir; for, when you speak the word,
> The gates shall open of their own accord;
> The genius of the place its lord shall meet,
> And bow its tow'ry forehead at your feet.

These bursts of extravagance, Dryden calls the "Dalilahs" of the theatre; and owns that many noisy lines of Maximin and Almanzor call out for

[c] I cannot see why Johnson has thought there was any want of clearness in this passage even in prose. Addison has given us almost the very same thought in very good prose: "If we look forward to him [the deity] for help, we shall never be in danger of falling down those precipices which our imagination is apt to create. Like those who walk upon a line, if we keep our eye fixed upon one point, we may step forward securely; whereas an imprudent or cowardly glance on either side will infallibly destroy us." Spectator, No. 615. J. B.

vengeance upon him: "but I knew," says he, "that they were bad enough to please, even when I wrote them." There is, surely, reason to suspect that he pleased himself, as well as his audience; and that these, like the harlots of other men, had his love, though not his approbation.

He had, sometimes, faults of a less generous and splendid kind. He makes, like almost all other poets, very frequent use of mythology, and sometimes connects religion and fable too closely without distinction.

He descends to display his knowledge with pedantick ostentation; as when, in translating Virgil, he says, "tack to the larboard,"—and "veer starboard;" and talks, in another work, of "virtue spooning before the wind."—His vanity now and then betrays his ignorance:

> They nature's king through nature's opticks view'd;
> Revers'd, they view'd him lessen'd to their eyes.

He had heard of reversing a telescope, and unluckily reverses the object.

He is, sometimes, unexpectedly mean. When he describes the supreme being as moved by prayer to stop the fire of London, what is his expression?

> A hollow crystal pyramid he takes,
> In firmamental waters dipp'd above,
> Of this a broad *extinguisher* he makes,
> And *hoods* the flames that to their quarry strove.

When he describes the last day, and the decisive tribunal, he intermingles this image:

> When rattling bones together fly,
> From the four quarters of the sky.

It was, indeed, never in his power to resist the temptation of a jest. In his elegy on Cromwell:

> No sooner was the Frenchman's cause embrac'd,
> Than the *light monsieur* the *grave don* outweigh'd;
> His fortune turn'd the scale.———

He had a vanity, unworthy of his abilities, to show, as may be suspected, the rank of the company with whom he lived, by the use of French words, which had then crept into conversation; such as *fraicheur* for *coolness*, *fougue* for *turbulence*, and a few more, none of which the language has incorporated or retained. They continue only where they stood first, perpetual warnings to future innovators.

These are his faults of affectation; his faults of negligence are beyond recital. Such is the unevenness of his compositions, that ten lines are seldom found together without something of which the reader is ashamed. Dryden was no rigid judge of his own pages; he seldom struggled after supreme excellence, but snatched in haste what was within his reach; and when he could content others, was himself contented. He did not keep present to his mind an idea of pure perfection; nor compare his works, such as they were, with what they might be made. He knew to whom he should be opposed. He had more musick than Waller, more vigour than Denham, and more nature than Cowley; and from his contemporaries he was in no danger. Standing, therefore, in the highest place, he had no care to rise by contending with himself; but while there was no name above his own, was willing to enjoy fame on the easiest terms.

He was no lover of labour. What he thought sufficient, he did not stop to make better; and allowed himself to leave many parts unfinished, in confidence that the good lines would overbalance the bad. What he had once written, he dismissed from his thoughts; and, I believe, there is no example to be found of any correction or improvement made by him after publication. The hastiness of his productions might be the effect of necessity; but his subsequent neglect could hardly have any other cause than impatience of study.

What can be said of his versification, will be little more than a dilatation of the praise given it by Pope:

> Waller was smooth; but Dryden taught to join
> The varying verse, the full resounding line,
> The long majestick march, and energy divine.

Some improvements had been already made in English numbers; but the full force of our language was not yet felt; the verse that was smooth was commonly feeble. If Cowley had sometimes a finished line, he had it by chance. Dryden knew how to choose the flowing and the sonorous words; to vary the pauses, and adjust the accents; to diversify the cadence, and yet preserve the smoothness of his metre.

Of triplets and alexandrines, though he did not introduce the use, he established it. The triplet has long subsisted among us. Dryden seems not to have traced it higher than to Chapman's Homer; but it is to be found in Phaer's Virgil, written in the reign of Mary; and in Hall's Satires, published five years before the death of Elizabeth.

The alexandrine was, I believe, first used by Spenser, for the sake of closing his stanza with a fuller sound. We had a longer measure of fourteen syllables, into which the Æneid was translated by Phaer, and other works of the ancients by other writers; of which Chapman's Iliad was, I believe, the last.

The two first lines of Phaer's third Æneid will exemplify this measure:

> When Asia's state was overthrown, and Priam's kingdom stout,
> All guiltless, by the power of gods above was rooted out.

As these lines had their break, or cæsura, always at the eighth syllable, it was thought, in time, commodious to divide them: and quatrains of lines, alternately, consisting of eight and six syllables, make the most soft and pleasing of our lyrick measures; as,

> Relentless time, destroying pow'r,
> Which stone and brass obey,
> Who giv'st to ev'ry flying hour
> To work some new decay.

In the alexandrine, when its power was once felt, some poems, as Drayton's Polyolbion, were wholly written; and sometimes the measures of twelve and fourteen syllables were interchanged with one another. Cowley was the first that inserted the alexandrine at pleasure among the heroick lines of ten syllables, and from him Dryden professes to have adopted it[d].

[d] This is an error. The alexandrine inserted among heroick lines of ten syllables is found in many of the writers of queen Elizabeth's reign. It

The triplet and alexandrine are not universally approved. Swift always censured them, and wrote some lines to ridicule them. In examining their propriety, it is to be considered that the essence of verse is regularity, and its ornament is variety. To write verse, is to dispose syllables and sounds harmonically by some known and settled rule; a rule, however, lax enough to substitute similitude for identity, to admit change without breach of order, and to relieve the ear without disappointing it. Thus a Latin hexameter is formed from dactyls and spondees, differently combined; the English heroick admits of acute or grave syllables, variously disposed. The Latin never deviates into seven feet, or exceeds the number of seventeen syllables; but the English alexandrine breaks the lawful bounds, and surprises the reader with two syllables more than he expected.

The effect of the triplet is the same: the ear has been accustomed to expect a new rhyme in every couplet; but is on a sudden surprised with three rhymes together, to which the reader could not accommodate his voice, did he not obtain notice of the change from the braces of the margins. Surely there is something unskilful in the necessity of such mechanical direction.

will be sufficient to mention Hall, who has already been quoted for the use of the triplet:

As tho' the staring world hang'd on his sleeve,
Whenever he smiles to laugh, and when he sighs to grieve.
Hall's Sat. book i. sat. 7.

Take another instance:

For shame! or better write or Labeo write none.
Hall's Sat. book ii. sat. 1. J. B.

Considering the metrical art simply as a science, and, consequently, excluding all casualty, we must allow that triplets and alexandrines, inserted by caprice, are interruptions of that constancy to which science aspires. And though the variety which they produce may very justly be desired, yet, to make our poetry exact, there ought to be some stated mode of admitting them.

But till some such regulation can be formed, I wish them still to be retained in their present state. They are sometimes grateful to the reader, and sometimes convenient to the poet. Fenton was of opinion, that Dryden was too liberal, and Pope too sparing, in their use.

The rhymes of Dryden are commonly just, and he valued himself for his readiness in finding them; but he is sometimes open to objection.

It is the common practice of our poets to end the second line with a weak or grave syllable:

> Together o'er the Alps methinks we fly,
> Fill'd with ideas of fair Italy.

Dryden sometimes puts the weak rhyme in the first:

> Laugh all the powers that favour *tyranny*,
> And all the standing army of the sky.

Sometimes he concludes a period or paragraph with the first line of a couplet, which, though the French seem to do it without irregularity, always displeases in English poetry.

The alexandrine, though much his favourite, is not always very diligently fabricated by him. It in-

variably requires a break at the sixth syllable; a rule which the modern French poets never violate, but which Dryden sometimes neglected:

And with paternal thunder vindicates his throne.

Of Dryden's works it was said by Pope, that he "could select from them better specimens of every mode of poetry than any other English writer could supply." Perhaps no nation ever produced a writer that enriched his language with such variety of models. To him we owe the improvement, perhaps the completion, of our metre, the refinement of our language, and much of the correctness of our sentiments. By him we are taught "sapere et fari," to think naturally and express forcibly. Though Davies has reasoned in rhyme before him, it may be, perhaps, maintained that he was the first who joined argument with poetry. He showed us the true bounds of a translator's liberty. What was said of Rome, adorned by Augustus, may be applied by an easy metaphor to English poetry, embellished by Dryden, "lateritiam invenit, marmoream reliquit." He found it brick, and he left it marble.

The invocation before the Georgicks is here inserted from Mr. Milbourne's version, that, according to his own proposal, his verses may be compared with those which he censures:

What makes the richest *tilth*, beneath what signs
To *plough*, and when to match your *elms and vines*;
What care with *flocks*, and what with *herds* agrees,
And all the management of frugal *bees*;
I sing, Mæcenas! Ye immensely clear,
Vast orbs of light, which guide the rolling year;

Bacchus, and mother Ceres, if by you
We fatt'ning *corn* for hungry *mast* pursue,
If, taught by you, we first the *cluster* prest,
And *thin cold streams* with *sprightly juice* refresht;
Ye *fawns*, the present *numens* of the field,
Wood nymphs and *fawns*, your kind assistance yield;
Your gifts I sing! And thou, at whose fear'd stroke
From rending earth the fiery *courser* broke,
Great Neptune, O assist my artful song!
And thou to whom the woods and groves belong,
Whose snowy heifers on her flow'ry plains
In mighty herds the Cæan isle maintains!
Pan, happy shepherd, if thy cares divine
E'er to improve thy Mænalas incline,
Leave thy *Lycœan wood* and *native grove*,
And with thy lucky smiles our work approve!
Be Pallas too, sweet oil's inventor, kind;
And he who first the crooked *plough* design'd!
Sylvanus, god of all the woods, appear,
Whose hands a new-drawn tender *cypress* bear!
Ye *gods* and *goddesses*, who e'er with love
Would guard our pastures and our fields improve!
You, who new plants from unknown lands supply,
And with condensing clouds obscure the sky,
And drop 'em softly thence in fruitful show'rs;
Assist my enterprise, ye gentler pow'rs!
And thou, great Cæsar! though we know not yet
Among what gods thou'lt fix thy lofty seat;
Whether thou'lt be the kind *tutelar* god
Of thy own Rome; or with thy awful nod
Guide the vast world, while thy great hand shall bear
The fruits and seasons of the turning year,
And thy bright brows thy mother's myrtles wear;
Whether thou'lt all the boundless ocean sway,
And seamen only to thyself shall pray,
Thule, the farthest island, kneel to thee,
And, that thou may'st her son by marriage be,
Tethys will for the happy purchase yield
To make a *dowry* of her wat'ry field;
Whether, thou'lt add to heaven a *brighter sign*,
And o'er the *summer months* serenely shine;
Where between Cancer and Erigone,
There yet remains a spacious *room* for thee;

Where the hot *Scorpion* too his arms declines,
And more to thee than half his *arch* resigns;
Whate'er thou'lt be; for sure the realms below
No just pretence to thy command can show:
No such ambition sways thy vast desires,
Though Greece her own *Elysian fields* admires.
And now, at last, contented Proserpine
Can all her mother's earnest pray'rs decline.
Whate'r thou'lt be, O guide our gentle course;
And with thy smiles our bold attempts enforce;
With me th' unknowing *rustics'* wants relieve,
And, though on earth, our sacred vows receive!

Mr. Dryden, having received from Rymer his Remarks on the Tragedies of the last Age, wrote observations on the blank leaves; which, having been in the possession of Mr. Garrick, are, by his favour, communicated to the publick, that no particle of Dryden may be lost:

"That we may the less wonder why pity and terrour are not now the only springs on which our tragedies move, and that Shakespeare may be more excused, Rapin confesses that the French tragedies now all run on the *tendre;* and gives the reason, because love is the passion which most predominates in our souls, and that, therefore, the passions represented become insipid, unless they are conformable to the thoughts of the audience. But it is to be concluded, that this passion works not now amongst the French so strongly as the other two did amongst the ancients. Amongst us, who have a stronger genius for writing, the operations from the writing are much stronger; for the raising of Shakespeare's passions is more from the excellency of the words and thoughts, than the justness of the occasion; and

if he has been able to pick single occasions, he has never founded the whole reasonably: yet, by the genius of poetry in writing, he has succeeded.

"Rapin attributes more to the *dictio*, that is, to the words and discourse of a tragedy, than Aristotle has done, who places them in the last rank of beauties; perhaps, only last in order, because they are the last product of the design, of the disposition or connexion of its parts; of the characters, of the manners of those characters, and of the thoughts proceeding from those manners. Rapin's words are remarkable: 'Tis not the admirable intrigue, the surprising events, and extraordinary incidents, that make the beauty of a tragedy; 'tis the discourses, when they are natural and passionate: so are Shakespeare's.

"The parts of a poem, tragick or heroick, are,

"1. The fable itself.

"2. The order or manner of its contrivance, in relation of the parts to the whole.

"3. The manners, or decency, of the characters, in speaking or acting what is proper for them, and proper to be shown by the poet.

"4. The thoughts which express the manners.

"5. The words which express those thoughts.

"In the last of these Homer excels Virgil; Virgil all other ancient poets; and Shakespeare all modern poets.

"For the second of these, the order: the meaning is, that a fable ought to have a beginning, middle, and an end, all just and natural; so that that part, e. g. which is the middle, could not natu-

rally be the beginning or end, and so of the rest: all depend on one another, like the links of a curious chain. If terrour and pity are only to be raised, certainly this author follows Aristotle's rules, and Sophocles' and Euripides' example: but joy may be raised too, and that doubly, either by seeing a wicked man punished, or a good man at last fortunate; or, perhaps, indignation, to see wickedness prosperous, and goodness depressed: both these may be profitable to the end of tragedy, reformation of manners; but the last improperly, only as it begets pity in the audience: though Aristotle, I confess, places tragedies of this kind in the second form.

"He who undertakes to answer this excellent critique of Mr. Rymer, in behalf of our English poets against the Greek, ought to do it in this manner: either by yielding to him the greatest part of what he contends for, which consists in this, that the μύθος, i. e. the design and conduct of it, is more conducing in the Greeks to those ends of tragedy, which Aristotle and he propose, namely, to cause terrour and pity; yet the granting this does not set the Greeks above the English poets.

"But the answerer ought to prove two things: first, that the fable is not the greatest masterpiece of a tragedy, though it be the foundation of it.

"Secondly, that other ends, as suitable to the nature of tragedy, may be found in the English, which were not in the Greek.

"Aristotle places the fable first; not 'quoad dignitatem, sed quoad fundamentum:' for a fable,

never so movingly contrived to those ends of his, pity and terrour, will operate nothing on our affections, except the characters, manners, thoughts, and words, are suitable.

"So that it remains for Mr. Rymer to prove, that in all those, or the greatest part of them, we are inferiour to Sophocles and Euripides: and this he has offered at, in some measure; but, I think, a little partially to the ancients.

"For the fable itself, 'tis in the English more adorned with episodes, and larger than in the Greek poets; consequently more diverting. For, if the action be but one, and that plain, without any counterturn of design or episode, i. e. underplot, how can it be so pleasing as the English, which have both underplot and a turned design, which keeps the audience in expectation of the catastrophe? whereas in the Greek poets we see through the whole design at first.

"For the characters, they are neither so many nor so various in Sophocles and Euripides, as in Shakespeare and Fletcher; only they are more adapted to those ends of tragedy which Aristotle commends to us, pity and terrour.

"The manners flow from the characters, and, consequently, must partake of their advantages and disadvantages.

"The thoughts and words, which are the fourth and fifth beauties of tragedy, are certainly more noble and more poetical in the English than in the Greek, which must be proved by comparing them

somewhat more equitably than Mr. Rymer has done.

"After all, we need not yield, that the English way is less conducing to move pity and terrour, because they often show virtue oppressed and vice punished; where they do not both, or either, they are not to be defended.

"And if we should grant that the Greeks performed this better, perhaps it may admit of dispute, whether pity and terrour are either the prime, or, at least, the only ends of tragedy.

" 'Tis not enough that Aristotle has said so; for Aristotle drew his models of tragedy from Sophocles and Euripides; and, if he had seen ours, might have changed his mind. And chiefly we have to say (what I hinted on pity and terrour, in the last paragraph save one,) that the punishment of vice and reward of virtue are the most adequate ends of tragedy, because most conducing to good example of life. Now, pity is not so easily raised for a criminal (and the ancient tragedy always represents its chief person such) as it is for an innocent man; and the suffering of innocence and punishment of the offender is of the nature of English tragedy: contrarily, in the Greek, innocence is unhappy often, and the offender escapes. Then we are not touched with the sufferings of any sort of men so much as of lovers; and this was almost unknown to the ancients; so that they neither administered poetical justice, of which Mr. Rymer boasts, so well as we; neither knew they the best commonplace of pity, which is love.

"He, therefore, unjustly blames us for not building on what the ancients left us; for it seems, upon consideration of the premises, that we have wholly finished what they began.

"My judgment on this piece is this: that it is extremely learned, but that the author of it is better read in the Greek than in the English poets; that all writers ought to study this critique, as the best account I have ever seen of the ancients; that the model of tragedy he has here given is excellent, and extremely correct; but that it is not the only model of all tragedy, because it is too much circumscribed in plot, characters, &c.; and, lastly, that we may be taught here justly to admire and imitate the ancients, without giving them the preference with this author, in prejudice to our own country.

"Want of method in this excellent treatise makes the thoughts of the author sometimes obscure.

"His meaning, that pity and terrour are to be moved, is, that they are to be moved, as the means conducing to the ends of tragedy, which are pleasure and instruction.

"And these two ends may be thus distinguished. The chief end of the poet is to please; for his immediate reputation depends on it.

"The great end of the poem is to instruct, which is performed by making pleasure the vehicle of that instruction; for poesy is an art, and all arts are made to profit. *Rapin.*

"The pity, which the poet is to labour for, is for the criminal, not for those or him whom he has mur-

dered, or who have been the occasion of the tragedy. The terrour is likewise in the punishment of the same criminal; who, if he be represented too great an offender, will not be pitied: if altogether innocent, his punishment will be unjust.

"Another obscurity is, where he says, Sophocles perfected tragedy by introducing the third actor; that is, he meant, three kinds of action; one company singing, or speaking; another playing on the musick; a third dancing.

"To make a true judgment in this competition betwixt the Greek poets and the English, in tragedy:

"Consider, first, how Aristotle has defined a tragedy. Secondly, what he assigns the end of it to be. Thirdly, what he thinks the beauties of it. Fourthly, the means to attain the end proposed.

"Compare the Greek and English tragick poets justly, and without partiality, according to those rules.

"Then, secondly, consider whether Aristotle has made a just definition of tragedy; of its parts, of its ends, and of its beauties; and whether he, having not seen any others but those of Sophocles, Euripides, &c. had or truly could determine what all the excellencies of tragedy are, and wherein they consist.

"Next, show in what ancient tragedy was deficient: for example, in the narrowness of its plots, and fewness of persons; and try whether that be not a fault in the Greek poets; and whether their excellency was so great, when the variety was visibly so

little; or whether what they did was not very easy to do.

"Then make a judgment on what the English have added to their beauties: as, for example, not only more plot, but also new passions; as, namely, that of love, scarcely touched on by the ancients, except in this one example of Phædra, cited by Mr. Rymer; and in that how short they were of Fletcher!

"Prove also that love, being an heroick passion, is fit for tragedy, which cannot be denied, because of the example alleged of Phædra; and how far Shakespeare has outdone them in friendship, &c.

"To return to the beginning of this inquiry; consider if pity and terrour be enough for tragedy to move: and I believe, upon a true definition of tragedy, it will be found that its work extends farther, and that it is to reform manners, by a delightful representation of human life in great persons, by way of dialogue. If this be true, then not only pity and terrour are to be moved, as the only means to bring us to virtue, but generally love to virtue, and hatred to vice; by showing the rewards of one, and punishments of the other; at least, by rendering virtue always amiable, though it be shown unfortunate, and vice detestable, though it be shown triumphant.

"If, then, the encouragement of virtue and discouragement of vice be the proper ends of poetry in tragedy, pity and terrour, though good means, are not the only. For all the passions, in their turns,

are to be set in a ferment: as joy, anger, love, fear, are to be used as the poet's commonplaces; and a general concernment for the principal actors is to be raised, by making them appear such in their characters, their words, and actions, as will interest the audience in their fortunes.

"And if, after all, in a larger sense, pity comprehends this concernment for the good, and terrour includes detestation for the bad, then let us consider whether the English have not answered this end of tragedy as well as the ancients, or perhaps better.

"And here Mr. Rymer's objections against these plays are to be impartially weighed, that we may see whether they are of weight enough to turn the balance against our countrymen.

" 'Tis evident those plays, which he arraigns, have moved both those passions in a high degree upon the stage.

" To give the glory of this away from the poet, and to place it upon the actors, seems unjust.

" One reason is, because whatever actors they have found, the event has been the same; that is, the same passions have been always moved: which shows, that there is something of force and merit in the plays themselves, conducing to the design of raising these two passions: and suppose them ever to have been excellently acted, yet action only adds grace, vigour, and more life, upon the stage; but cannot give it wholly where it is not first. But, secondly, I dare appeal to those who have never seen them acted, if they have not found these two passions

moved within them: and if the general voice will carry it, Mr. Rymer's prejudice will take off his single testimony.

"This, being matter of fact, is reasonably to be established by this appeal; as, if one man says it is night, when the rest of the world conclude it to be day, there needs no farther argument against him, that it is so.

"If he urge, that the general taste is depraved, his arguments to prove this can, at best, but evince that our poets took not the best way to raise those passions; but experience proves against him, that those means, which they have used, have been successful, and have produced them.

"And one reason of that success is, in my opinion, this: that Shakespeare and Fletcher have written to the genius of the age and nation in which they lived; for though nature, as he objects, is the same in all places, and reason too the same; yet the climate, the age, the disposition of the people, to whom a poet writes, may be so different, that what pleased the Greeks would not satisfy an English audience.

"And if they proceeded upon a foundation of truer reason to please the Athenians, than Shakespeare and Fletcher to please the English, it only shows that the Athenians were a more judicious people; but the poet's business is certainly to please the audience.

"Whether our English audience have been pleased, hitherto, with acorns, as he calls it, or with

bread, is the next question; that is, whether the means which Shakespeare and Fletcher have used, in their plays, to raise those passions before named, be better applied to the ends by the Greek poets than by them. And, perhaps, we shall not grant him this wholly: let it be granted, that a writer is not to run down with the stream, or to please the people by their usual methods, but rather to reform their judgments, it still remains to prove that our theatre needs this total reformation.

"The faults, which he has found in their designs, are rather wittily aggravated in many places than reasonably urged; and as much may be returned on the Greeks, by one who were as witty as himself.

"They destroy not, if they are granted, the foundation of the fabrick: only take away from the beauty of the symmetry: for example, the faults in the character of the king, in King and No King, are not, as he makes them, such as render him detestable, but only imperfections which accompany human nature, and are, for the most part, excused by the violence of his love; so that they destroy not our pity or concernment for him: this answer may be applied to most of his objections of that kind.

"And Rollo committing many murders, when he is answerable but for one, is too severely arraigned by him; for, it adds to our horrour and detestation of the criminal; and poetick justice is not neglected neither; for we stab him in our minds for every offence which he commits; and the point, which the poet is to gain on the audience, is not so much in

the death of an offender as the raising an horrour of his crimes.

"That the criminal should neither be wholly guilty, nor wholly innocent, but so participating of both as to move both pity and terrour, is certainly a good rule, but not perpetually to be observed; for that were to make all tragedies too much alike; which objection he foresaw, but has not fully answered.

"To conclude, therefore; if the plays of the ancients are more correctly plotted, ours are more beautifully written. And, if we can raise passions as high on worse foundations, it shows our genius in tragedy is greater; for in all other parts of it the English have manifestly excelled them."

The original of the following letter is preserved in the library at Lambeth, and was kindly imparted to the publick by the reverend Dr. Vyse.

Copy of an original letter from John Dryden, esq. to his sons in Italy, from a MS. in the Lambeth library, marked N°. 933, p. 56.

(superscribed)

"All' illustrissimo Sig^re^
Carlo Dryden, Camariere
d'Honore a S. S. "In Roma.
"Franca per Mantoua.

"Dear Sons, "Sept. the 3d, our style.

"Being now at sir William Bowyer's in the country, I cannot write at large, because I find myself somewhat indisposed with a cold, and am thick of hearing, rather worse than I was in town. I am glad to find, by your letter of July 26th, your style,

that you are both in health; but wonder you should think me so negligent as to forget to give you an account of the ship in which your parcel is to come. I have written to you two or three letters concerning it, which I have sent by safe hands, as I told you, and doubt not but you have them before this can arrive to you. Being out of town, I have forgotten the ship's name, which your mother will inquire, and put it into her letter, which is joined with mine. But the master's name I remember: he is called Mr. Ralph Thorp; the ship is bound to Leghorn, consigned to Mr. Peter and Mr. Thomas Ball, merchants. I am of your opinion, that by Tonson's means almost all our letters have miscarried for this last year. But, however, he has missed of his design in the dedication, though he had prepared the book for it; for in every figure of Æneas he has caused him to be drawn like king William, with a hooked nose. After my return to town, I intend to alter a play of sir Robert Howard's, written long since, and lately put by him into my hands; 'tis called the Conquest of China by the Tartars. It will cost me six weeks' study, with the probable benefit of a hundred pounds. In the mean time, I am writing a song for St. Cecilia's Feast, who, you know, is the patroness of musick. This is troublesome, and no way beneficial; but I could not deny the stewards of the feast, who came in a body to me to desire that kindness, one of them being Mr. Bridgman, whose parents are your mother's friends. I hope to send you thirty guineas between Michaelmas and Christ-

mas, of which I will give you an account when I come to town. I remember the counsel you give me in your letter; but dissembling, though lawful in some cases, is not my talent; yet, for your sake, I will struggle with the plain openness of my nature, and keep in my just resentments against that degenerate order. In the mean time I flatter not myself with any manner of hopes, but do my duty, and suffer for God's sake; being assured, beforehand, never to be rewarded, though the times should alter. Towards the latter end of this month, September, Charles will begin to recover his perfect health, according to his nativity, which, casting it myself, I am sure is true, and all things hitherto have happened accordingly to the very time that I predicted them: I hope, at the same time, to recover more health, according to my age. Remember me to poor Harry, whose prayers I earnestly desire. My Virgil succeeds in the world beyond its desert or my expectation. You know the profits might have been more; but neither my conscience nor my honour would suffer me to take them: but I never can repent of my constancy, since I am thoroughly persuaded of the justice of the cause for which I suffer. It has pleased God to raise up many friends to me amongst my enemies, though they who ought to have been my friends are negligent of me. I am called to dinner, and cannot go on with this letter, which I desire you to excuse; and am

"Your most affectionate father,

"JOHN DRYDEN."

SMITH

EDMUND SMITH is one of those lucky writers who have, without much labour, attained high reputation, and who are mentioned with reverence, rather for the possession, than the exertion of uncommon abilities.

Of his life little is known; and that little claims no praise but what can be given to intellectual excellence, seldom employed to any virtuous purpose. His character, as given by Mr. Oldisworth, with all the partiality of friendship, which is said, by Dr. Burton, to show "what fine things one man of parts can say of another," and which, however, comprises great part of what can be known of Mr. Smith, it is better to transcribe, at once, than to take by pieces. I shall subjoin such little memorials as accident has enabled me to collect.

Mr. Edmund Smith was the only son of an eminent merchant, one Mr. Neale, by a daughter of the famous baron Lechmere. Some misfortunes of his father, which were soon followed by his death, were the occasion of the son's being left very young in the hands of a near relation, (one who married Mr. Neale's sister,) whose name was Smith.

This gentleman and his lady treated him as their own child, and put him to Westminster school, under the care of Dr. Busby; whence, after the loss of his faithful and generous guardian, (whose name he assumed and retained,) he was removed to Christ church, in Oxford, and there, by his aunt, handsomely maintained till her death; after which he

continued a member of that learned and ingenious society, till within five years of his own; though, some time before his leaving Christ church, he was sent for by his mother to Worcester, and owned and acknowledged as her legitimate son; which had not been mentioned, but to wipe off the aspersions that were ignorantly cast by some on his birth. It is to be remembered, for our author's honour, that, when at Westminster election he stood a candidate for one of the universities, he so signally distinguished himself by his conspicuous performances, that there arose no small contention, between the representative electors of Trinity college, in Cambridge, and Christ church, in Oxon, which of those two royal societies should adopt him as their own. But the electors of Trinity college having the preference of choice that year, they resolutely elected him; who yet, being invited, at the same time, to Christ church, chose to accept of a studentship there. Mr. Smith's perfections, as well natural as acquired, seem to have been formed upon Horace's plan, who says, in his Art of Poetry:

> Ego nec studium sine divite vena,
> Nec rude quid prosit video ingenium; alterius sic
> Altera poscit opem res, et conjurat amice.

He was endowed by nature with all those excellent and necessary qualifications which are previous to the accomplishment of a great man. His memory was large and tenacious, yet, by a *curious felicity, chiefly* susceptible of the finest impressions it received

from the best authors he read, which it always preserved in their primitive strength and amiable order.

He had a quickness of apprehension, and vivacity of understanding, which easily took in and surmounted the most subtile and knotty parts of mathematicks and metaphysicks. His wit was prompt and flowing, yet solid and piercing; his taste delicate, his head clear, and his way of expressing his thoughts perspicuous and engaging. I shall say nothing of his person, which yet was so well *turned*, that no neglect of himself in his dress could render it disagreeable; insomuch, that the fair sex, who observed and esteemed him, at once commended and reproved him by the name of the *handsome* sloven. An eager but generous and noble emulation grew up with him; which (as it were a rational sort of instinct) pushed him upon striving to excel in every art and science that could make him a credit to his college, and that college the ornament of the most learned and polite university; and it was his happiness to have several contemporaries and fellow-students who exercised and excited this virtue in themselves and others, thereby becoming so deservedly in favour with this age, and so good a proof of its nice discernment. His judgment, naturally good, soon ripened into an exquisite fineness and distinguishing sagacity, which as it was active and busy, so it was vigorous and manly, keeping even paces with a rich and strong imagination, always upon the wing, and never tired with aspiring. Hence it was, that, though he writ as young as

Cowley, he had no puerilities; and his earliest productions were so far from having any thing in them mean and trifling, that, like the junior compositions of Mr. Stepney, they may make grey authors blush. There are many of his first essays in oratory, in epigram, elegy, and epick, still handed about the university in manuscript, which show a masterly hand; and, though maimed and injured by frequent transcribing, make their way into our most celebrated miscellanies, where they shine with uncommon lustre. Besides those verses in the Oxford books, which he could not help setting his name to, several of his compositions came abroad under other names, which his own singular modesty, and faithful silence, strove in vain to conceal. The Encænia and publick collections of the university upon state subjects, were never in such esteem, either for elegy or congratulation, as when he contributed most largely to them; and it was natural for those who knew his peculiar way of writing, to turn to his share in the work, as by far the most relishing part of the entertainment. As his parts were extraordinary, so he well knew how to improve them; and not only to polish the diamond, but enchase it in the most solid and durable metal. Though he was an academick the greatest part of his life, yet he contracted no sourness of temper, no spice of pedantry, no itch of disputation, or obstinate contention for the old or new philosophy, no assuming way of dictating to others, which are faults (though excusable) which some are insensibly led into, who are constrained to dwell

long within the walls of a private college. His conversation was pleasant and instructive, and what Horace said of Plotius, Varius, and Virgil, might justly be applied to him:

Nil ego contulerim jucundo sanus amico. Sat. v. l. l.

As correct a writer as he was in his most elaborate pieces, he read the works of others with candour, and reserved his greatest severity for his own compositions; being readier to cherish and advance, than damp or depress a rising genius, and as patient of being excelled himself (if any could excel him) as industrious to excel others.

'Twere to be wished he had confined himself to a particular profession, who was capable of surpassing in any; but, in this, his want of application was, in a great measure, owing to his want of due encouragement.

He passed through the exercises of the college and university with unusual applause; and though he often suffered his friends to call him off from his retirements, and to lengthen out those jovial avocations, yet his return to his studies was so much the more passionate, and his intention upon those refined pleasures of reading and thinking so vehement, (to which his facetious and unbended intervals bore no proportion,) that the habit grew upon him; and the series of meditation and reflection being kept up whole weeks together, he could better sort his ideas, and take in the sundry parts of a science at one view, without interruption or confusion. Some, indeed, of

his acquaintance, who were pleased to distinguished between the wit and the scholar, extolled him altogether on the account of the first of these titles; but others, who knew him better, could not forbear doing him justice as a prodigy in both kinds. He had signalized himself, in the schools, as a philosopher and polemick of extensive knowledge and deep penetration; and went through all the courses with a wise regard to the dignity and importance of each science. I remember him in the Divinity school responding and disputing with a perspicuous energy, a ready exactness, and commanding force of argument, when Dr. Jane worthily presided in the chair; whose condescending and disinterested commendation of him gave him such a reputation, as silenced the envious malice of his enemies, who durst not contradict the approbation of so profound a master in theology. None of those self-sufficient creatures, who have either trifled with philosophy, by attempting to ridicule it, or have encumbered it with novel terms and burdensome explanations, understood its real weight and purity half so well as Mr. Smith. He was too discerning to allow of the character of unprofitable, rugged, and abstruse, with some superficial sciolists, (so very smooth and polite, as to admit of no impression,) either out of an unthinking indolence, or an ill-grounded prejudice, had affixed to this sort of studies. He knew the thorny terms of philosophy served well to fence in the true doctrines of religion; and looked upon school-divinity as upon a rough but well-wrought

armour, which might at once adorn and defend the christian hero, and equip him for the combat.

Mr. Smith had a long and perfect intimacy with all the Greek and Latin classicks; with whom he had carefully compared whatever was worth perusing in the French, Spanish, and Italian, (to which languages he was no stranger,) and in all the celebrated writers of his own country. But then, according to the curious observation of the late earl of Shaftesbury, he kept the poet in awe by regular criticism; and, as it were, married the two arts for their mutual support and improvement. There was not a tract of credit, upon that subject, which he had not diligently examined, from Aristotle down to Hedelin and Bossu; so that, having each rule constantly before him, he could carry the art through every poem, and at once point out the graces and deformities. By this means he seemed to read with a design to correct, as well as imitate.

Being thus prepared, he could not but taste every little delicacy that was set before him; though it was impossible for him, at the same time, to be fed and nourished with any thing but what was substantial and lasting. He considered the ancients and moderns not as parties or rivals for fame, but as architects upon one and the same plan, the art of poetry; according to which he judged, approved, and blamed, without flattery or detraction. If he did not always commend the compositions of others, it was not ill-nature, (which was not in his temper,) but strict justice, that would not let him call a few

flowers set in ranks, a glib measure, and so many couplets, by the name of poetry: he was of Ben Jonson's opinion, who could not admire

> Verses as smooth and soft as cream,
> In which there was neither depth nor stream.

And, therefore, though his want of complaisance for some men's overbearing vanity made him enemies, yet the better part of mankind were obliged by the freedom of his reflections.

His Bodleian Speech, though taken from a remote and imperfect copy, hath shown the world how great a master he was of the Ciceronian eloquence, mixed with the conciseness and force of Demosthenes, the elegant and moving turns of Pliny, and the acute and wise reflections of Tacitus.

Since Temple and Roscommon, no man understood Horace better, especially as to his happy diction, rolling numbers, beautiful imagery, and alternate mixture of the soft and the sublime. This endeared Dr. Hannes's odes to him, the finest genius for Latin lyrick since the Augustan age. His friend Mr. Philip's ode to Mr. St. John, (late lord Bolingbroke,) after the manner of Horace's Lusory or Amatorian Odes, is certainly a masterpiece; but Mr. Smith's Pocockius is of the sublimer kind, though, like Waller's writings upon Oliver Cromwell, it wants not the most delicate and surprising turns peculiar to the person praised. I do not remember to have seen any thing like it in Dr. Bathurst[e], who

[e] Dr. Ralph Bathurst, whose Life and Literary Remains were published in 1761, by Mr. Thomas Warton. C.

had made some attempts this way with applause. He was an excellent judge of humanity; and so good an historian, that in familiar discourse he would talk over the most memorable facts in antiquity, the lives, actions, and characters of celebrated men, with amazing facility and accuracy. As he had thoroughly read and digested Thuanus's works, so he was able to copy after him; and his talent in this kind was so well known and allowed, that he had been singled out, by some great men, to write a history, which it was for their interest to have done with the utmost art and dexterity. I shall not mention for what reasons this design was dropped, though they are very much to Mr. Smith's honour. The truth is, and I speak it before living witnesses, whilst an agreeable company could fix him upon a subject of useful literature, nobody shone to greater advantage; he seemed to be that Memmius whom Lucretius speaks of:

> Quem tu, dea, tempore in omni
> Omnibus ornatum voluisti excellere rebus.

His works are not many, and those scattered up and down in miscellanies and collections, being wrested from him by his friends with great difficulty and reluctance. All of them together make but a small part of that much greater body which lies dispersed in the possession of numerous acquaintance; and cannot, perhaps, be made entire without great injustice to him, because few of them had his last hand, and the transcriber was often obliged to take the liberties of a friend. His condolence for the

death of Mr. Philips is full of the noblest beauties, and hath done justice to the ashes of that second Milton, whose writings will last as long as the English language, generosity, and valour. For him Mr. Smith had contracted a perfect friendship; a passion he was most susceptible of, and whose laws he looked upon as sacred and inviolable.

Every subject that passed under his pen had all the life, proportion, and embellishments bestowed on it, which an exquisite skill, a warm imagination, and a cool judgment, possibly could bestow on it. The epick, lyrick, elegiack, every sort of poetry he touched upon, (and he had touched upon a great variety,) was raised to its proper height, and the differences between each of them observed with a judicious accuracy. We saw the old rules and new beauties placed in admirable order by each other; and there was a predominant fancy and spirit of his own infused, superiour to what some draw off from the ancients, or from poesies here and there culled out of the moderns, by a painful industry and servile imitation. His contrivances were adroit and magnificent; his images lively and adequate; his sentiments charming and majestick; his expressions natural and bold; his numbers various and sounding; and that enamelled mixture of classical wit, which, without redundance and affectation, sparkled through his writings, and was no less pertinent and agreeable.

His Phædra is a consummate tragedy, and the success of it was as great as the most sanguine expectations of his friends could promise or foresee.

The number of nights, and the common method of filling the house, are not always the surest marks of judging what encouragement a play meets with; but the generosity of all the persons of a refined taste about town was remarkable on this occasion; and it must not be forgotten how zealously Mr. Addison espoused his interest, with all the elegant judgment and diffusive good-nature for which that accomplished gentleman and author is so justly valued by mankind. But as to Phædra, she has certainly made a finer figure under Mr. Smith's conduct, upon the English stage, than either in Rome or Athens; and if she excels the Greek and Latin Phædra, I need not say she surpasses the French one, though embellished with whatever regular beauties and moving softness Racine himself could give her.

No man had a juster notion of the difficulty of composing than Mr. Smith; and he sometimes would create greater difficulties than he had reason to apprehend. Writing with ease, what (as Mr. Wycherley speaks) may be easily written, moved his indignation. When he was writing upon a subject, he would seriously consider what Demosthenes, Homer, Virgil, or Horace, if alive, would say upon that occasion, which whetted him to exceed himself, as well as others. Nevertheless, he could not, or would not, finish several subjects he undertook; which may be imputed either to the briskness of his fancy, still hunting after new matter, or to an occasional indolence, which spleen and lassitude brought upon him, which, of all his foibles, the

world was least inclined to forgive. That this was not owing to conceit and vanity, or a fulness of himself, (a frailty which has been imputed to no less men than Shakespeare and Jonson,) is clear from hence; because he left his works to the entire disposal of his friends, whose most rigorous censures he even courted and solicited, submitting to their animadversions, and the freedom they took with them, with an unreserved and prudent resignation.

I have seen sketches and rough draughts of some poems he designed, set out analytically; wherein the fable, structure, and connexion, the images, incidents, moral episodes, and a great variety of ornaments, were so finely laid out, so well fitted to the rules of art, and squared so exactly to the precedents of the ancients, that I have often looked on these poetical elements with the same concern with which curious men are affected at the sight of the most entertaining remains and ruins of an antique figure or building. Those fragments of the learned, which some men have been so proud of their pains in collecting, are useless rarities, without form and without life, when compared with these embryos, which wanted not spirit enough to preserve them; so that I cannot help thinking, that, if some of them were to come abroad, they would be as highly valued by the poets, as the sketches of Julio and Titian are by the painters; though there is nothing in them but a few outlines, as to the design and proportion.

It must be confessed, that Mr. Smith had some defects in his conduct, which those are most apt to

remember who could imitate him in nothing else. His freedom with himself drew severer acknowledgments from him than all the malice he ever provoked was capable of advancing, and he did not scruple to give even his misfortunes the hard name of faults; but, if the world had half his good-nature, all the shady parts would be entirely struck out of his character.

A man, who under poverty, calamities, and disappointments, could make so many friends, and those so truly valuable, must have just and noble ideas of the passion of friendship, in the success of which consisted the greatest, if not the only, happiness of his life. He knew very well what was due to his birth, though fortune threw him short of it in every other circumstance of life. He avoided making any, though perhaps reasonable, complaints of her dispensations, under which he had honour enough to be easy, without touching the favours she flung in his way when offered to him at the price of a more durable reputation. He took care to have no dealings with mankind in which he could not be just; and he desired to be at no other expense in his pretensions than that of intrinsick merit, which was the only burden and reproach he ever brought upon his friends. He could say, as Horace did of himself, what I never yet saw translated:

Meo sum pauper in ære.

At his coming to town, no man was more surrounded by all those who really had or pretended

to wit, or more courted by the great men, who had then a power and opportunity of encouraging arts and sciences, and gave proofs of their fondness for the name of patron in many instances, which will ever be remembered to their glory. Mr. Smith's character grew upon his friends by intimacy, and outwent the strongest prepossessions which had been conceived in his favour. Whatever quarrel a few sour creatures, whose obscurity is their happiness, may possibly have to the age; yet, amidst a studied neglect, and total disuse of all those ceremonial attendances, fashionable equipments, and external recommendations, which are thought necessary introductions into the *grand monde*, this gentleman was so happy as still to please; and whilst the rich, the gay, the noble, and honourable, saw how much he excelled in wit and learning, they easily forgave him all other differences. Hence it was that both his acquaintance and retirements were his own free choice. What Mr. Prior observes upon a very great character was true of him, "that most of his faults brought their excuse with them."

Those who blamed him most, understood him least, it being the custom of the vulgar to charge an excess upon the most complaisant, and to form a character by the morals of a few, who have sometimes spoiled an hour or two in good company. Where only fortune is wanting to make a great name, that single exception can never pass upon the best judges and most equitable observers of mankind; and when the time comes for the world to

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spare their pity, we may justly enlarge our demands upon them for their admiration.

Some few years before his death, he had engaged himself in several considerable undertakings; in all which he had prepared the world to expect mighty things from him. I have seen about ten sheets of his English Pindar, which exceeded any thing of that kind I could ever hope for in our own language. He had drawn out the plan of a tragedy of the Lady Jane Grey, and had gone through several scenes of it. But he could not well have bequeathed that work to better hands than where, I hear, it is at present lodged; and the bare mention of two such names may justify the largest expectations, and is sufficient to make the town an agreeable invitation.

His greatest and noblest undertaking was Longinus. He had finished an entire translation of the Sublime, which he sent to the reverend Mr. Richard Parker, a friend of his, late of Merton college, an exact critick in the Greek tongue, from whom it came to my hands. The French version of monsieur Boileau, though truly valuable, was far short of it. He proposed a large addition to this work, of notes and observations of his own, with an entire system of the art of poetry, in three books, under the titles of Thought, Diction, and Figure. I saw the last of these perfect, and in a fair copy, in which he showed prodigious judgment and reading; and particularly had reformed the art of rhetorick, by reducing that vast and confused heap of terms, with which a long succession of pedants had encumbered the world,

to a very narrow compass, comprehending all that was useful and ornamental in poetry. Under each head and chapter, he intended to make remarks upon all the ancients and moderns, the Greek, Latin, English, French, Spanish, and Italian poets, and to note their several beauties and defects.

What remains of his works is left, as I am informed, in the hands of men of worth and judgment, who loved him. It cannot be supposed they would suppress any thing that was his, but out of respect to his memory, and for want of proper hands to finish what so great a genius had begun.

Such is the declamation of Oldisworth, written while his admiration was yet fresh, and his kindness warm; and, therefore, such as, without any criminal purpose of deceiving, shows a strong desire to make the most of all favourable truth. I cannot much commend the performance. The praise is often indistinct, and the sentences are loaded with words of more pomp than use. There is little, however, that can be contradicted, even when a plainer tale comes to be told.

Edmund Neale, known by the name of Smith, was born at Handley, the seat of the Lechmeres, in Worcestershire. The year of his birth is uncertain[f].

[f] By his epitaph he appears to have been forty-two years old when he died. He was, consequently, born in the year 1668. R.

He was born in 1662, as appears from the register of matriculations among the archives of the university of Oxford.

He was educated at Westminster. It is known to have been the practice of Dr. Busby to detain those youths long at school, of whom he had formed the highest expectations. Smith took his master's degree on the 8th of July, 1696; he, therefore, was probably admitted into the university in 1689[g], when we may suppose him twenty years old.

His reputation for literature in his college was such as has been told; but the indecency and licentiousness of his behaviour drew upon him, Dec. 24, 1694, while he was yet only bachelor, a publick admonition, entered upon record, in order to his expulsion. Of this reproof the effect is not known. He was probably less notorious. At Oxford, as we all know, much will be forgiven to literary merit; and of that he had exhibited sufficient evidence by his excellent ode on the death of the great orientalist, Dr. Pocock, who died in 1691, and whose praise must have been written by Smith when he had been yet but two years in the university.

This ode, which closed the second volume of the Musæ Anglicanæ, though, perhaps, some objections may be made to its Latinity, is by far the best lyrick composition in that collection; nor do I know where to find it equalled among the modern writers. It expresses, with great felicity, images not classical in classical diction: its digressions and returns have been deservedly recommended by Trapp, as models for imitation.

[g] He was elected to Cambridge, 1688; but, as has been before stated, went to Oxford. J. B.

He has several imitations of Cowley:

> Vestitur hinc tot sermo coloribus
> Quot tu, Pococki, dissimilis tui
> Orator effers, quot vicissim
> Te memores celebrare gaudent.

I will not commend the figure which makes the orator *pronounce colours*, or give to *colours memory* and *delight*. I quote it, however, as an imitation of these lines:

> So many languages he had in store,
> That only fame shall speak of him in more[h].

The simile, by which an old man, retaining the fire of his youth, is compared to Ætna flaming through the snow, which Smith has used with great pomp, is stolen from Cowley, however little worth the labour of conveyance.

He proceeded to take his degree of master of arts, July 8, 1696. Of the exercises which he performed on that occasion, I have not heard any thing memorable.

As his years advanced, he advanced in reputation; for he continued to cultivate his mind, though he did not amend his irregularities, by which he gave so much offence, that, April 24, 1700, the dean and chapter declared "the place of Mr. Smith void, he having been convicted of riotous misbehaviour in the house of Mr. Cole, an apothecary; but it was referred to the dean when, and upon what occasion, the sentence should be put in execution."

Thus tenderly was he treated: the governours of his college could hardly keep him, and yet wished that he would not force them to drive him away.

[h] Cowley on sir R. Wotton. J. B.

Some time afterwards he assumed an appearance of decency: in his own phrase, he *whitened* himself, having a desire to obtain the censorship, an office of honour and some profit in the college; but, when the election came, the preference was given to Mr. Foulkes, his junior: the same, I suppose, that joined with Freind in an edition of part of Demosthenes. The censor is a tutor; and it was not thought proper to trust the superintendence of others to a man who took so little care of himself.

From this time Smith employed his malice and his wit against the dean, Dr. Aldrich, whom he considered as the opponent of his claim. Of his lampoon upon him, I once heard a single line, too gross to be repeated.

But he was still a genius and a scholar, and Oxford was unwilling to lose him: he was endured, with all his pranks and his vices, two years longer; but, on Dec. 20, 1705, at the instance of all the canons, the sentence, declared five years before, was put in execution.

The execution was, I believe, silent and tender; for one of his friends, from whom I learned much of his life, appeared not to know it.

He was now driven to London, where he associated himself with the whigs; whether because they were in power, or because the tories had expelled him, or because he was a whig by principle, may, perhaps, be doubted. He was, however, caressed by men of great abilities, whatever were their party, and was supported by the liberality of those who delighted in his conversation.

There was once a design, hinted at by Oldisworth, to have made him useful. One evening, as he was sitting with a friend at a tavern, he was called down by the waiter; and, having staid some time below, came up thoughtful. After a pause, said he to his friend: "He that wanted me below was Addison, whose business was to tell me that a History of the Revolution was intended, and to propose that I should undertake it. I said, 'What shall I do with the character of lord Sunderland?' and Addison immediately returned, 'When, Rag, were you drunk last?' and went away."

Captain *Rag* was a name which he got at Oxford, by his negligence of dress.

This story I heard from the late Mr. Clark, of Lincoln's Inn, to whom it was told by the friend of Smith.

Such scruples might debar him from some profitable employments; but, as they could not deprive him of any real esteem, they left him many friends; and no man was ever better introduced to the theatre than he, who, in that violent conflict of parties, had a prologue and epilogue from the first wits on either side.

But learning and nature will now and then take different courses. His play pleased the criticks, and the criticks only. It was, as Addison has recorded, hardly heard the third night. Smith had, indeed, trusted entirely to his merit, had ensured no band of applauders, nor used any artifice to force success, and found that naked excellence was not sufficient for its own support.

The play, however, was bought by Lintot, who advanced the price from fifty guineas, the current rate, to sixty; and Halifax, the general patron, accepted the dedication. Smith's indolence kept him from writing the dedication, till Lintot, after fruitless importunity, gave notice that he would publish the play without it. Now, therefore, it was written; and Halifax expected the author with his book, and had prepared to reward him with a place of three hundred pounds a year. Smith, by pride, or caprice, or indolence, or bashfulness, neglected to attend him, though doubtless warned and pressed by his friends, and, at last, missed his reward by not going to solicit it.

Addison has, in the Spectator, mentioned the neglect of Smith's tragedy as disgraceful to the nation, and imputes it to the fondness for operas, then prevailing. The authority of Addison is great; yet the voice of the people, when to please the people is the purpose, deserves regard. In this question, I cannot but think the people in the right. The fable is mythological, a story which we are accustomed to reject as false; and the manners are so distant from our own, that we know them not from sympathy, but by study: the ignorant do not understand the action; the learned reject it as a schoolboy's tale; "incredulus odi;" what I cannot for a moment believe, I cannot for a moment behold with interest or anxiety. The sentiments thus remote from life are removed yet further by the diction, which is too luxuriant and splendid for dialogue,

and envelopes the thoughts rather than displays them. It is a scholar's play, such as may please the reader rather than the spectator; the work of a vigorous and elegant mind, accustomed to please itself with its own conceptions, but of little acquaintance with the course of life.

Dennis tells us, in one of his pieces, that he had once a design to have written the tragedy of Phædra; but was convinced that the action was too mythological.

In 1709, a year after the exhibition of Phædra, died John Philips, the friend and fellow-collegian of Smith, who, on that occasion, wrote a poem, which justice must place among the best elegies which our language can show, an elegant mixture of fondness and admiration, of dignity and softness. There are some passages too ludicrous; but every human performance has its faults.

This elegy it was the mode among his friends to purchase for a guinea; and, as his acquaintance was numerous, it was a very profitable poem.

Of his Pindar, mentioned by Oldisworth, I have never otherwise heard. His Longinus he intended to accompany with some illustrations, and had selected his instances of the false sublime from the works of Blackmore.

He resolved to try again the fortune of the stage, with the story of Lady Jane Grey. It was not unlikely, that his experience of the inefficacy and incredibility of a mythological tale might determine him to choose an action from English history, at no great distance from our own times, which was to end

in a real event, produced by the operation of known characters.

A subject will not easily occur that can give more opportunities of informing the understanding, for which Smith was unquestionably qualified, or for moving the passions, in which I suspect him to have had less power.

Having formed his plan, and collected materials, he declared, that a few months would complete his design; and, that he might pursue his work with less frequent avocations, he was, in June 1710, invited, by Mr. George Ducket to his house, at Gartham, in Wiltshire. Here he found such opportunities of indulgence as did not much forward his studies, and particularly some strong ale, too delicious to be resisted. He ate and drank till he found himself plethorick; and then, resolving to ease himself by evacuation, he wrote to an apothecary in the neighbourhood a prescription of a purge so forcible, that the apothecary thought it his duty to delay it, till he had given notice of its danger. Smith, not pleased with the contradiction of a shopman, and boastful of his own knowledge, treated the notice with rude contempt, and swallowed his own medicine, which, in July, 1710, brought him to the grave. He was buried at Gartham.

Many years afterwards, Ducket communicated to Oldmixon, the historian, an account, pretended to have been received from Smith, that Clarendon's History was, in its publication, corrupted by Ald-

rich, Smalridge, and Atterbury; and that Smith was employed to forge and insert the alterations.

This story was published triumphantly by Oldmixon, and may be supposed to have been eagerly received; but its progress was soon checked; for, finding its way into the Journal of Trévoux, it fell under the eye of Atterbury, then an exile in France, who immediately denied the charge, with this remarkable particular, that he never, in his whole life, had once spoken to Smith[1]; his company being, as must be inferred, not accepted by those who attended to their characters.

The charge was afterwards very diligently refuted by Dr. Burton, of Eton, a man eminent for literature, and, though not of the same party with Aldrich and Atterbury, too studious of truth to leave them burdened with a false charge. The testimonies which he has collected have convinced mankind, that either Smith or Ducket was guilty of wilful and malicious falsehood.

This controversy brought into view those parts of Smith's life, which, with more honour to his name, might have been concealed.

Of Smith I can yet say a little more. He was a man of such estimation among his companions, that the casual censures or praises, which he dropped in conversation, were considered, like those of Scaliger, as worthy of preservation.

[1] See bishop Atterbury's Epistolary Correspondence, 1799, vol. iii. pp. 126, 133. In the same work, vol. i. p. 325, it appears that Smith was at one time suspected, by Atterbury, to have been the author of the Tale of a Tub. N. See Idler, No. 65.

He had great readiness and exactness of criticism, and, by a cursory glance over a new composition, would exactly tell all its faults and beauties.

He was remarkable for the power of reading with great rapidity, and of retaining, with great fidelity, what he so easily collected.

He, therefore, always knew what the present question required; and, when his friends expressed their wonder at his acquisitions, made in a state of apparent negligence and drunkenness, he never discovered his hours of reading, or method of study, but involved himself in affected silence, and fed his own vanity with their admiration and conjectures.

One practice he had, which was easily observed: if any thought or image was presented to his mind, that he could use or improve, he did not suffer it to be lost; but, amidst the jollity of a tavern, or in the warmth of conversation, very diligently committed it to paper.

Thus it was that he had gathered two quires of hints for his new tragedy; of which Rowe, when they were put into his hands, could make, as he says, very little use, but which the collector considered as a valuable stock of materials.

When he came to London, his way of life connected him with the licentious and dissolute; and he affected the airs and gaiety of a man of pleasure; but his dress was always deficient; scholastick cloudiness still hung about him; and his merriment was sure to produce the scorn of his companions.

With all his carelessness and all his vices, he was

one of the murmurers at fortune; and wondered why he was suffered to be poor, when Addison was caressed and preferred; nor would a very little have contented him; for he estimated his wants at six hundred pounds a year.

In his course of reading it was particular, that he had diligently perused, and accurately remembered, the old romances of knight-errantry.

He had a high opinion of his own merit, and was something contemptuous in his treatment of those whom he considered as not qualified to oppose or contradict him. He had many frailties; yet it cannot but be supposed that he had great merit, who could obtain to the same play a prologue from Addison, and an epilogue from Prior; and who could have at once the patronage of Halifax, and the praise of Oldisworth.

For the power of communicating these minute memorials, I am indebted to my conversation with Gilbert Walmsley[j], late registrar of the ecclesiastical court of Litchfield, who was acquainted both with Smith and Ducket; and declared, that, if the tale concerning Clarendon were forged, he should suspect Ducket of the falsehood, "for *Rag* was a man of great veracity."

Of Gilbert Walmsley, thus presented to my mind, let me indulge myself in the remembrance. I knew him very early: he was one of the first friends that literature procured me, and I hope that, at least, my gratitude made me worthy of his notice.

[j] See prefatory remarks to Irene, vol. i. p. 25.

He was of an advanced age, and I was only not a boy; yet he never received my notions with contempt. He was a whig, with all the virulence and malevolence of his party; yet difference of opinion did not keep us apart. I honoured him and he endured me.

He had mingled with the gay world, without exemption from its vices or its follies, but had never neglected the cultivation of his mind; his belief of revelation was unshaken; his learning preserved his principles; he grew first regular, and then pious.

His studies had been so various, that I am not able to name a man of equal knowledge. His acquaintance with books was great: and what he did not immediately know, he could, at least, tell where to find. Such was his amplitude of learning, and such his copiousness of communication, that it may be doubted whether a day now passes in which I have not some advantage from his friendship.

At this man's table I enjoyed many cheerful and instructive hours, with companions such as are not often found; with one who has lengthened, and one who has gladdened life; with Dr. James, whose skill in physick will be long remembered; and with David Garrick, whom I hoped to have gratified with this character of our common friend; but what are the hopes of man! I am disappointed by that stroke of death, which has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the publick stock of harmless pleasure.

In the library at Oxford is the following ludicrous analysis of Pocockius:

Ex Autographo

[Sent by the author to Mr. Urry.]

Opusculum hoc, Halberdarie amplissime, in lucem proferre hactenus distuli, judicii tui acumen subveritus magis quam bipennis. Tandem aliquando oden hanc ad te mitto sublimem, teneram, flebilem, suavem, qualem demum divinus (si musis vacaret) scripsisset Gastrellus: adeo scilicet sublimem ut inter legendum dormire, adeo flebilem ut ridere velis. Cujus elegantiam ut melius inspicias, versuum ordinem et materiam breviter referam. 1^mus^ versus de duobus præliis decantatis. 2^dus^ et 3^us^ de Lotharingio, cuniculis subterraneis, saxis, ponto, hostibus, et Asia. 4^tus^ et 5^tus^ de catenis, sudibus, uncis, draconibus, tigribus et crocodilis. 6^us^, 7^us^, 8^us^, 9^us^, de Gomorrha, de Babylone, Babele, et quodam domi suæ peregrino. 10^us^, aliquid de quodam Pocockio. 11^us^, 12^us^, de Syria, Solyma. 13^us^, 14^us^, de Hosea, et quercu, et de juvene quodam valde sene. 15^us^, 16^us^, de Ætna, et quomodo Ætna Pocockio sit valde similis. 17^us^, 18^us^, de tuba, astro, umbra, flammis, rotis, Pocockio non neglecto. Cætera, de Christianis, Ottomanis, Babyloniis, Arabibus, et gravissima agrorum melancholia; de Cæsare, *Flacco*[k], Nestore, et miserando juvenis cujusdam florentissimi fato, anno ætatis suæ centesimo præmature abrepti. Quæ

[k] Pro *Flacco*, animo paulo attentiore, scripsissem *Marone*.

omnia cum accurate expenderis, necesse est ut oden hanc meam admiranda plane varietate constare fatearis. Subito ad Batavos proficiscor, lauro ab illis donandus. Prius vero Pembrochienses voco ad certamen poeticum. Vale.

Illustrissima tua deosculor crura.

E. Smith.

OF Mr. Richard Duke I can find few memorials. He was bred at Westminster[l] and Cambridge; and Jacob relates, that he was some time tutor to the duke of Richmond.

He appears, from his writings, to have been not ill qualified for poetical compositions; and being conscious of his powers, when he left the university, he enlisted himself among the wits[m]. He was the familiar friend of Otway; and was engaged, among other popular names, in the translations of Ovid and Juvenal. In his Review, though unfinished, are some vigorous lines. His poems are not below mediocrity; nor have I found much in them to be praised[n].

With the wit he seems to have shared the dissoluteness of the times; for some of his compositions are such as he must have reviewed with detestation in his later days, when he published those sermons which Felton has commended.

Perhaps, like some other foolish young men, he rather talked than lived vitiously, in an age when he that would be thought a wit was afraid to say his prayers; and whatever might have been bad in the

[l] He was admitted there in 1670; was elected to Trinity college, Cambridge, in 1675; and took his master's degree in 1682. N.

[m] Floriana, a pastoral, on the death of the dutchess of Southampton, published anonymously in folio, May 17, 1681, was written by Richard Duke. M.

[n] They make a part of a volume published by Tonson in 8vo. 1717, containing the poems of the earl of Roscommon, and the duke of Buckingham's Essay on Poetry; but were first published in Dryden's Miscellany, as were most, if not all, of the poems in that collection. H.

first part of his life, was surely condemned and reformed by his better judgment.

In 1683, being then master of arts and fellow of Trinity college in Cambridge, he wrote a poem, on the marriage of the lady Anne with George, prince of Denmark.

He took orders°; and, being made prebendary of Gloucester, became a proctor in convocation for that church, and chaplain to queen Anne.

In 1710, he was presented, by the bishop of Winchester, to the wealthy living of Witney, in Oxfordshire, which he enjoyed but a few months. On February 10, 1710–11, having returned from an entertainment, he was found dead the next morning. His death is mentioned in Swift's Journal.

° He was presented to the rectory of Blaby, in Leicestershire, in 1687-8; and obtained a prebend at Gloucester in 1688. N.

WILLIAM KING was born in London in 1663; the son of Ezekiel King, a gentleman. He was allied to the family of Clarendon.

From Westminster school, where he was a scholar on the foundation, under the care of Dr. Busby, he was, at eighteen, elected to Christ church, in 1681; where he is said to have prosecuted his studies with so much intenseness and activity, that before he was eight years standing he had read over, and made remarks upon, twenty-two thousand odd hundred books and manuscripts[p]. The books were certainly not very long, the manuscripts not very difficult, nor the remarks very large; for the calculator will find that he despatched seven a day for every day of his eight years, with a remnant that more than satisfies most other students. He took his degree in the most expensive manner, as a grand compounder; whence it is inferred that he inherited a considerable fortune.

In 1688, the same year in which he was made master of arts, he published a confutation of Varillas's account of Wickliffe; and, engaging in the study of the civil law, became doctor in 1692, and was admitted advocate at Doctors' Commons.

He had already made some translations from the French, and written some humorous and satirical pieces; when, in 1694, Molesworth published his Account of Denmark, in which he treats the Danes and their monarch with great contempt; and takes

[p] This appears by his Adversaria, printed in his works, edit. 1776, 3 vols. C.

the opportunity of insinuating those wild principles, by which he supposes liberty to be established, and by which his adversaries suspect that all subordination and government is endangered.

This book offended prince George; and the Danish minister presented a memorial against it. The principles of its author did not please Dr. King; and, therefore, he undertook to confute part, and laugh at the rest. The controversy is now forgotten; and books of this kind seldom live long, when interest and resentment have ceased.

In 1697, he mingled in the controversy between Boyle and Bentley; and was one of those who tried what wit could perform in opposition to learning; on a question which learning only could decide.

In 1699, was published by him, a Journey to London, after the method of Dr. Martin Lister, who had published a Journey to Paris. And, in 1700, he satirized the Royal Society, at least sir Hans Sloane, their president, in two dialogues, entitled The Transactioneer.

Though he was a regular advocate in the courts of civil and canon law, he did not love his profession, nor, indeed, any kind of business which interrupted his voluptuary dreams, or forced him to rouse from that indulgence in which only he could find delight. His reputation, as a civilian, was yet maintained by his judgments in the courts of delegates, and raised very high by the address and knowledge which he discovered in 1700, when he defended the earl of Anglesea against his lady, afterwards dutchess of

Buckinghamshire, who sued for a divorce, and obtained it.

The expense of his pleasures, and neglect of business, had now lessened his revenues; and he was willing to accept of a settlement in Ireland, where, about 1702, he was made judge of the admiralty, commissioner of the prizes, keeper of the records in Birmingham's tower, and vicar-general to Dr. Marsh, the primate.

But it is vain to put wealth within the reach of him who will not stretch out his hand to take it. King soon found a friend, as idle and thoughtless as himself, in Upton, one of the judges, who had a pleasant house called Mountown, near Dublin, to which King frequently retired; delighting to neglect his interest, forget his cares, and desert his duty.

Here he wrote Mully of Mountown, a poem; by which, though fanciful readers, in the pride of sagacity, have given it a political interpretation, was meant originally no more than it expressed, as it was dictated only by the author's delight in the quiet of Mountown.

In 1708, when lord Wharton was sent to govern Ireland, King returned to London, with his poverty, his idleness, and his wit; and published some essays, called Useful Transactions. His Voyage to the Island of Cajamai is particularly commended. He then wrote the Art of Love, a poem remarkable, notwithstanding its title, for purity of sentiment; and, in 1709, imitated Horace in an Art of Cookery, which he published, with some letters to Dr. Lister.

In 1710, he appeared as a lover of the church, on the side of Sacheverell; and was supposed to have concurred, at least, in the projection of The Examiner. His eyes were open to all the operations of whiggism; and he bestowed some strictures upon Dr. Kennett's adulatory sermon at the funeral of the duke of Devonshire.

The history of the Heathen Gods, a book composed for schools, was written by him in 1710. The work is useful; but might have been produced without the powers of King. The same year he published Rufinus, an historical essay; and a poem, intended to dispose the nation to think as he thought of the duke of Marlborough and his adherents.

In 1711, competence, if not plenty, was again put into his power. He was, without the trouble of attendance, or the mortification of a request, made gazetteer. Swift, Freind, Prior, and other men of the same party, brought him the key of the gazetteer's office. He was now again placed in a profitable employment, and again threw the benefit away. An act of insolvency made his business, at that time, particularly troublesome; and he would not wait till hurry should be at an end, but impatiently resigned it, and returned to his wonted indigence and amusements.

One of his amusements at Lambeth, where he resided, was to mortify Dr. Tenison, the archbishop, by a publick festivity, on the surrender of Dunkirk to Hill; an event with which Tenison's political bigotry did not suffer him to be delighted. King was

resolved to counteract his sullenness, and, at the expense of a few barrels of ale, filled the neighbourhood with honest merriment.

In the autumn of 1712, his health declined; he grew weaker by degrees, and died on Christmas day. Though his life had not been without irregularity, his principles were pure and orthodox, and his death was pious.

After this relation it will be naturally supposed that his poems were rather the amusements of idleness than efforts of study; that he endeavoured rather to divert than astonish; that his thoughts seldom aspired to sublimity; and that, if his verse was easy and his images familiar, he attained what he desired. His purpose is to be merry; but, perhaps, to enjoy his mirth, it may be sometimes necessary to think well of his opinions[q].

q Dr. Johnson appears to have made but little use of the life of Dr. King, prefixed to his works, in three vols. 1776; to which it may not be impertinent to refer the reader. His talent for humor ought to be praised in the highest terms. In that at least, he yielded to none of his contemporaries.

SPRAT

THOMAS SPRAT was born in 1636, at Tallaton in Devonshire, the son of a clergyman; and having been educated, as he tells of himself, not at Westminster or Eton, but at a little school by the church-yard side, became a commoner of Wadham college, in Oxford, in 1651; and, being chosen scholar next year, proceeded through the usual academical course, and, in 1657, became master of arts. He obtained a fellowship, and commenced poet.

In 1659, his poem on the death of Oliver was published, with those of Dryden and Waller. In his dedication to Dr. Wilkins, he appears a very willing and liberal encomiast, both of the living and the dead. He implores his patron's excuse of his verses, both as falling "so infinitely below the full and sublime genius of that excellent poet who made this way of writing free of our nation," and being "so little equal and proportioned to the renown of the prince on whom they were written; such great actions and lives deserving to be the subject of the noblest pens and most divine phansies." He proceeds: "Having so long experienced your care and indulgence, and been formed, as it were, by your own hands, not to entitle you to any thing which my meanness produces, would be not only injustice, but sacrilege."

He published, the same year, a poem on the Plague of Athens; a subject of which it is not easy to say what could recommend it. To these he added, afterwards, a poem on Mr. Cowley's death.

After the restoration he took orders, and by Cow-

ley's recommendation was made chaplain to the duke of Buckingham, whom he is said to have helped in writing the Rehearsal. He was likewise chaplain to the king.

As he was the favourite of Wilkins, at whose house began those philosophical conferences and inquiries, which in time produced the Royal Society, he was consequently engaged in the same studies, and became one of the fellows; and when, after their incorporation, something seemed necessary to reconcile the publick to the new institution, he undertook to write its history, which he published in 1667. This is one of the few books which selection of sentiment and elegance of diction have been able to preserve, though written upon a subject flux and transitory. The history of the Royal Society is now read, not with the wish to know what they were then doing, but how their transactions are exhibited by Sprat.

In the next year he published Observations on Sorbière's Voyage into England, in a letter to Mr. Wren. This is a work not ill-performed; but, perhaps, rewarded with at least its full proportion of praise.

In 1668, he published Cowley's Latin poems, and prefixed, in Latin, the life of the author; which he afterwards amplified, and placed before Cowley's English works, which were by will committed to his care.

Ecclesiastical benefices now fell fast upon him. In 1668, he became a prebendary of Westminster, and

had afterwards the church of St. Margaret, adjoining to the abbey. He was, in 1680, made canon of Windsor; in 1683, dean of Westminster; and, in 1684, bishop of Rochester.

The court having thus a claim to his diligence and gratitude, he was required to write the History of the Ryehouse Plot; and, in 1685, published a true Account and Declaration of the horrid Conspiracy against the late King, his present Majesty, and the present Government; a performance which he thought convenient, after the revolution, to extenuate and excuse.

The same year, being clerk of the closet to the king, he was made dean of the chapel royal; and, the year afterwards, received the last proof of his master's confidence, by being appointed one of the commissioners for ecclesiastical affairs. On the critical day, when the declaration distinguished the true sons of the church of England, he stood neuter, and permitted it to be read at Westminster; but pressed none to violate his conscience; and, when the bishop of London was brought before them, gave his voice in his favour.

Thus far he suffered interest or obedience to carry him; but further he refused to go. When he found that the powers of the ecclesiastical commission were to be exercised against those who had refused the declaration, he wrote to the lords, and other commissioners, a formal profession of his unwillingness to exercise that authority any longer, and withdrew himself from them. After they had read his letter,

they adjourned for six months, and scarcely ever met afterwards.

When king James was frighted away, and a new government was to be settled, Sprat was one of those who considered, in a conference, the great question, Whether the crown was vacant, and manfully spoke in favour of his old master.

He complied, however, with the new establishment, and was left unmolested; but, in 1692, a strange attack was made upon him by one Robert Young and Stephen Blackhead, both men convicted of infamous crimes, and both, when the scheme was laid, prisoners in Newgate. These men drew up an association, in which they whose names were subscribed, declared their resolution to restore king James, to seize the princess of Orange, dead or alive, and to be ready with thirty thousand men to meet king James when he should land. To this they put the names of Sancroft, Sprat, Marlborough, Salisbury, and others. The copy of Dr. Sprat's name was obtained by a fictitious request, to which an answer in his own hand was desired. His hand was copied so well, that he confessed it might have deceived himself. Blackhead, who had carried the letter, being sent again with a plausible message, was very curious to see the house, and particularly importunate to be let into the study; where, as is supposed, he designed to leave the association. This, however, was denied him; and he dropped it in a flower-pot in the parlour.

Young now laid an information before the privy

council; and May 7, 1692, the bishop was arrested, and kept at a messenger's, under a strict guard, eleven days. His house was searched, and directions were given that the flower-pots should be inspected. The messengers, however, missed the room in which the paper was left. Blackhead went, therefore, a third time; and finding his paper where he had left it, brought it away.

The bishop having been enlarged, was, on June the 10th and 13th, examined again before the privy council, and confronted with his accusers. Young persisted, with the most obdurate impudence, against the strongest evidence; but the resolution of Blackhead, by degrees, gave way. There remained at last no doubt of the bishop's innocence, who, with great prudence and diligence, traced the progress, and detected the characters of the two informers, and published an account of his own examination and deliverance; which made such an impression upon him, that he commemorated it through life by a yearly day of thanksgiving.

With what hope or what interest, the villains had contrived an accusation which they must know themselves utterly unable to prove, was never discovered.

After this he passed his days in the quiet exercise of his function. When the cause of Sacheverell put the publick in commotion, he honestly appeared among the friends of the church. He lived to his seventy-ninth year, and died May 20, 1713.

Burnet is not very favourable to his memory; but he and Burnet were old rivals. On some publick

occasion they both preached before the house of commons. There prevailed, in those days, an indecent custom: when the preacher touched any favourite topick, in a manner that delighted his audience, their approbation was expressed by a loud *hum*, continued in proportion to their zeal or pleasure. When Burnet preached, part of his congregation *hummed* so loudly and so long, that he sat down to enjoy it, and rubbed his face with his handkerchief. When Sprat preached, he likewise was honoured with the like animating *hum;* but he stretched out his hand to the congregation, and cried, "Peace, peace, I pray you, peace."

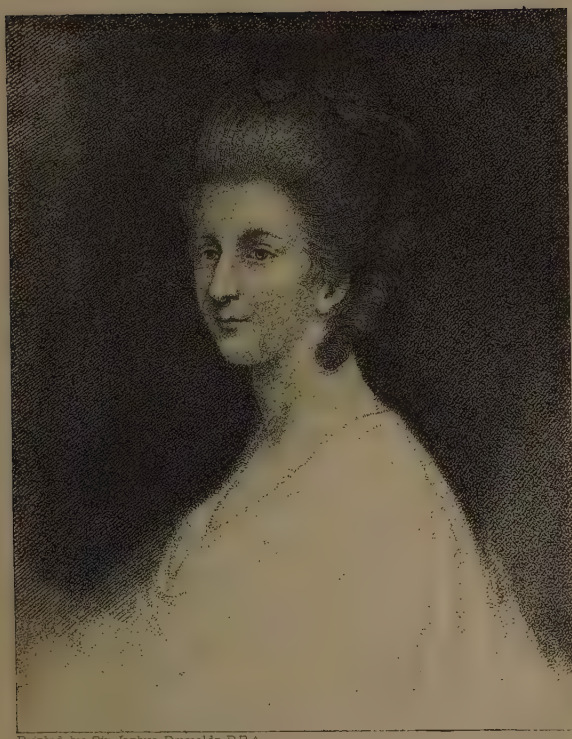
This I was told in my youth by my father, an old man, who had been no careless observer of the passages of those times.

Burnet's sermon, says Salmon, was remarkable for sedition, and Sprat's for loyalty. Burnet had the thanks of the house; Sprat had no thanks, but a good living from the king, which, he said, was of as much value as the thanks of the commons.

The works of Sprat, besides his few poems, are, the History of the Royal Society, the Life of Cowley, the Answer to Sorbière, the History of the Rye-house Plot, the Relation of his own Examination, and a volume of sermons. I have heard it observed, with great justness, that every book is of a different kind, and that each has its distinct and characteristical excellence[r].

[r] This observation was made to Dr. Johnson by the right hon. Wm. Gerard Hamilton, as he told me, at Tunbridge, August, 1792. M.

My business is only with his poems. He considered Cowley as a model; and supposed that, as he was imitated, perfection was approached. Nothing, therefore, but Pindarick liberty was to be expected. There is in his few productions no want of such conceits as he thought excellent; and of those our judgment may be settled by the first that appears in his praise of Cromwell, where he says, that Cromwell's "fame, like man, will grow white as it grows old."



Painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds P.R.A

MRS. LENNOX

HALIFAX

THE life of the earl of Halifax was properly that of an artful and active statesman, employed in balancing parties, contriving expedients, and combating opposition, and exposed to the vicissitudes of advancement and degradation; but, in this collection, poetical merit is the claim to attention; and the account which is here to be expected may properly be proportioned not to his influence in the state, but to his rank among the writers of verse.

Charles Montague was born April 16, 1661, at Horton, in Northamptonshire, the son of Mr. George Montague, a younger son of the earl of Manchester. He was educated first in the country, and then removed to Westminster, where, in 1677, he was chosen a king's scholar, and recommended himself to Busby by his felicity in extemporary epigrams. He contracted a very intimate friendship with Mr. Stepney; and, in 1682, when Stepney was elected to Cambridge, the election of Montague being not to proceed till the year following, he was afraid lest, by being placed at Oxford, he might be separated from his companion, and, therefore, solicited to be removed to Cambridge, without waiting for the advantages of another year.

It seems, indeed, time to wish for a removal; for he was already a schoolboy of one-and-twenty.

His relation, Dr. Montague, was then master of the college in which he was placed a fellow-commoner, and took him under his particular care. Here

he commenced an acquaintance with the great Newton, which continued through his life, and was at last attested by a legacy[s].

In 1685, his verses on the death of king Charles made such an impression on the earl of Dorset, that he was invited to town, and introduced by that universal patron to the other wits. In 1687, he joined with Prior in the City Mouse and Country Mouse, a burlesque of Dryden's Hind and Panther. He signed the invitation to the prince of Orange, and sat in the convention. He, about the same time, married the countess dowager of Manchester, and intended to have taken orders; but afterwards altering his purpose, he purchased, for 1500*l.* the place of one of the clerks of the council.

After he had written his epistle on the victory of the Boyne, his patron Dorset introduced him to king William, with this expression: "Sir, I have brought a *mouse* to wait on your majesty." To which the king is said to have replied, "You do well to put me in the way of making a *man* of him;" and ordered him a pension of five hundred pounds. This story, however current, seems to have been made after the event. The king's answer implies a greater acquaintance with our proverbial and familiar diction than king William could possibly have attained.

In 1691, being member of the house of commons, he argued warmly in favour of a law to grant the assistance of counsel in trials for high treason; and,

[s] He left sir Isaac Newton 200*l.* M.

in the midst of his speech falling into some confusion, was for awhile silent; but, recovering himself, observed, "how reasonable it was to allow counsel to men called as criminals before a court of justice, when it appeared how much the presence of that assembly could disconcert one of their own body[t]."

After this he rose fast into honours and employments, being made one of the commissioners of the treasury, and called to the privy council. In 1694, he became chancellor of the exchequer; and the next year engaged in the great attempt of the recoinage, which was in two years happily completed. In 1696, he projected the *general fund* and raised the credit of the exchequer; and, after inquiry concerning a grant of Irish crown-lands, it was determined, by a vote of the commons, that Charles Montague, esquire, "had deserved his majesty's favour." In 1698, being advanced to the first commission of the treasury, he was appointed one of the regency in the king's absence; the next year he was made auditor of the exchequer, and the year after created baron Halifax. He was, however, impeached by the commons; but the articles were dismissed by the lords.

[t] Mr. Reed observes, that this anecdote is related by Mr. Walpole, in his Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors, of the earl of Shaftesbury, author of the Characteristicks, but it appears to me to be a mistake, if we are to understand that the words were spoken by Shaftesbury at this time, when he had no seat in the house of commons; nor did the bill pass at this time, being thrown out by the house of lords. It became a law in the seventh of William, when Halifax and Shaftesbury both had seats. The editors of the Biog. Brit. adopt Mr. Walpole's story, but they are not speaking of this period. The story first appeared in the life of lord Halifax, published in 1715.

At the accession of queen Anne he was dismissed from the council; and in the first parliament of her reign was again attacked by the commons, and again escaped by the protection of the lords. In 1704, he wrote an answer to Bromley's speech against occasional conformity. He headed the inquiry into the danger of the church. In 1706, he proposed and negotiated the union with Scotland; and when the elector of Hanover received the garter, after the act had passed for securing the protestant succession, he was appointed to carry the ensigns of the order to the electoral court. He sat as one of the judges of Sacheverell; but voted for a mild sentence. Being now no longer in favour, he contrived to obtain a writ for summoning the electoral prince to parliament, as duke of Cambridge.

At the queen's death he was appointed one of the regents; and at the accession of George the first was made earl of Halifax, knight of the garter, and first commissioner of the treasury, with a grant to his nephew of the reversion of the auditorship of the exchequer. More was not to be had, and this he kept but a little while; for, on the 19th of May, 1715, he died of an inflammation of his lungs.

Of him, who from a poet became a patron of poets, it will be readily believed that the works would not miss of celebration. Addison began to praise him early, and was followed or accompanied by other poets; perhaps, by almost all, except Swift and Pope, who forbore to flatter him in his life, and after his death spoke of him, Swift with slight cen-

sure, and Pope, in the character of Bufo, with acrimonious contempt[u].

He was, as Pope says, "fed with dedications;" for Tickell affirms that no dedicator was unrewarded. To charge all unmerited praise with the guilt of flattery, and to suppose that the encomiast always knows and feels the falsehoods of his assertions, is, surely, to discover great ignorance of human nature and human life. In determinations depending not on rules, but on experience and comparison, judgment is always, in some degree, subject to affection. Very near to admiration is the wish to admire.

Every man willingly gives value to the praise which he receives, and considers the sentence passed in his favour as the sentence of discernment. We admire, in a friend, that understanding that selected us for confidence; we admire more, in a patron, that judgment which, instead of scattering bounty indiscriminately, directed it to us; and, if the patron be an author, those performances which gratitude forbids us to blame, affection will easily dispose us to exalt.

[u] Mr. Roscoe denies that Pope's character of Bufo, in the prologue to the Satires, was intended for Halifax. In evidence of his assertion he quotes several passages from Pope's poems, and the preface to the Iliad, all published after that nobleman's death, when the poet could hope for no return for his praises, when flattery could not sooth "the dull cold ear of death." Twenty years after Halifax's decease, he is thus commemorated:

"But does the court one worthy man remove,
That moment I declare he has my love:
I shun their zenith, court their mild decline;
Thus Somers once, and Halifax were mine."

See Roscoe's Pope, vol. i. 138. Ed.

To these prejudices, hardly culpable, interest adds a power always operating, though not always, because not willingly, perceived. The modesty of praise wears gradually away; and, perhaps, the pride of patronage may be in time so increased, that modest praise will no longer please.

Many a blandishment was practised upon Halifax, which he would never have known, had he no other attractions than those of his poetry, of which a short time has withered the beauties. It would now be esteemed no honour, by a contributor to the monthly bundles of verses, to be told, that, in strains either familiar or solemn, he sings like Montague.

PARNELL

THE life of Dr. Parnell is a task which I should very willingly decline, since it has been lately written by Goldsmith, a man of such variety of powers, and such felicity of performance, that he always seemed to do best that which he was doing; a man who had the art of being minute without tediousness, and general without confusion; whose language was copious without exuberance, exact without constraint, and easy without weakness.

What such an author has told, who would tell again? I have made an abstract from his larger narrative; and have this gratification from my attempt, that it gives me an opportunity of paying due tribute to the memory of Goldsmith:

Τὸ γὰρ γέρας ἐστι θανόντων.

Thomas Parnell was the son of a commonwealthsman of the same name, who, at the restoration, left Congleton, in Cheshire; where the family had been established for several centuries, and, settling in Ireland, purchased an estate, which, with his lands in Cheshire, descended to the poet, who was born at Dublin, in 1679; and, after the usual education at a grammar-school, was, at the age of thirteen, admitted into the college, where, in 1700, he became master of arts; and was the same year ordained a deacon, though under the canonical age, by a dispensation from the bishop of Derry.

About three years afterwards he was made a priest; and, in 1705, Dr. Ashe, the bishop of Clogher, con-

ferred upon him the archdeaconry of Clogher. About the same time he married Mrs. Anne Minchin, an amiable lady, by whom he had two sons, who died young, and a daughter who long survived him.

At the ejection of the whigs, in the end of queen Anne's reign, Parnell was persuaded to change his party, not without much censure from those whom he forsook, and was received by the new ministry as a valuable reinforcement. When the earl of Oxford was told that Dr. Parnell waited among the crowd in the outer room, he went, by the persuasion of Swift, with his treasurer's staff in his hand, to inquire for him, and to bid him welcome; and, as may be inferred from Pope's dedication, admitted him as a favourite companion to his convivial hours, but, as it seems often to have happened in those times to the favourites of the great, without attention to his fortune, which, however, was in no great need of improvement.

Parnell, who did not want ambition or vanity, was desirous to make himself conspicuous, and to show how worthy he was of high preferment. As he thought himself qualified to become a popular preacher, he displayed his elocution with great success in the pulpits of London; but the queen's death putting an end to his expectations, abated his diligence; and Pope represents him as falling from that time into intemperance of wine. That in his latter life he was too much a lover of the bottle, is not denied; but I have heard it imputed to a cause more likely to obtain forgiveness from mankind, the

untimely death of a darling son; or, as others tell, the loss of his wife, who died, 1712, in the midst of his expectations.

He was now to derive every future addition to his preferments from his personal interest with his private friends, and he was not long unregarded. He was warmly recommended by Swift to archbishop King, who gave him a prebend in 1713; and in May, 1716, presented him to the vicarage of Finglass, in the diocese of Dublin, worth four hundred pounds a year. Such notice from such a man inclines me to believe, that the vice of which he has been accused was not gross, or not notorious.

But his prosperity did not last long. His end, whatever was its cause, was now approaching. He enjoyed his preferment little more than a year; for in July, 1717, in his thirty-eighth year, he died at Chester, on his way to Ireland.

He seems to have been one of those poets who take delight in writing. He contributed to the papers of that time, and probably published more than he owned. He left many compositions behind him, of which Pope selected those which he thought best, and dedicated them to the earl of Oxford. Of these Goldsmith has given an opinion, and his criticism it is seldom safe to contradict. He bestows just praise upon the Rise of Woman, the Fairy Tale, and the Pervigilium Veneris; but has very properly remarked, that in the Battle of Mice and Frogs, the Greek names have not in English their original effect.

He tells us that the Bookworm is borrowed from Beza; but he should have added, with modern applications; and, when he discovers that Gay Bacchus is translated from Augurellus, he ought to have remarked, that the latter part is purely Parnell's. Another poem, when Spring comes on, is, he says, taken from the French. I would add, that the description of Barrenness, in his verses to Pope, was borrowed from Secundus; but lately searching for the passage, which I had formerly read, I could not find it. The Night-piece on Death is indirectly preferred by Goldsmith to Gray's Church-yard; but, in my opinion, Gray has the advantage in dignity, variety, and originality of sentiment. He observes, that the story of the Hermit is in More's Dialogues and Howell's Letters, and supposes it to have been originally Arabian.

Goldsmith has not taken any notice of the Elegy to the old Beauty, which is, perhaps, the meanest; nor of the Allegory on Man, the happiest of Parnell's performances. The hint of the Hymn to Contentment[v] I suspect to have been borrowed from Cleiveland.

The general character of Parnell is not great extent of comprehension, or fertility of mind. Of the little that appears, still less is his own. His praise must be derived from the easy sweetness of his diction: in his verses there is more happiness than pains:

[v] Parnell's "exquisite Hymn to Contentment, is manifestly formed on the *Divina Psalmodia* of cardinal Bona—this imitation has escaped the notice of Dr. Johnson, and, it is believed, of all other critics and commentators." Dr. Jebb's Sermons, second edition, p. 94. Ed.

he is sprightly without effort, and always delights, though he never ravishes; every thing is proper, yet every thing seems casual. If there is some appearance of elaboration in The Hermit, the narrative, as it is less airy, is less pleasing[w]. Of his other compositions it is impossible to say whether they are the productions of nature, so excellent as not to want the help of art, or of art so refined as to resemble nature.

This criticism relates only to the pieces published by Pope. Of the large appendages, which I find in the last edition, I can only say, that I know not whence they came, nor have ever inquired whither they are going. They stand upon the faith of the compilers.

[w] Dr. Warton asks, "Less than what?"

GARTH

SAMUEL GARTH was of a good family in Yorkshire, and, from some school in his own country, became a student at Peter-house, in Cambridge, where he resided till he became doctor of physick, on July the 7th, 1691. He was examined before the college at London, on March the 12th, 1691-2, and admitted fellow, July 26th, 1693. He was soon so much distinguished by his conversation and accomplishments, as to obtain very extensive practice; and, if a pamphlet of those times may be credited, had the favour and confidence of one party, as Radcliffe had of the other.

He is always mentioned as a man of benevolence; and it is just to suppose, that his desire of helping the helpless disposed him to so much zeal for the dispensary; an undertaking of which some account, however short, is proper to be given.

Whether what Temple says be true, that physicians have had more learning than the other faculties, I will not stay to inquire; but, I believe, every man has found in physicians great liberality and dignity of sentiment, very prompt effusion of beneficence, and willingness to exert a lucrative art where there is no hope of lucre. Agreeably to this character, the College of Physicians, in July, 1687, published an edict, requiring all the fellows, candidates, and licentiates, to give gratuitous advice to the neighbouring poor.

This edict was sent to the court of aldermen; and, a question being made to whom the appellation of

the *poor* should be extended, the college answered, that it should be sufficient to bring a testimonial from the clergyman officiating in the parish where the patient resided.

After a year's experience, the physicians found their charity frustrated by some malignant opposition, and made, to a great degree, vain by the high price of physick; they, therefore, voted, in August, 1688, that the laboratory of the college should be accommodated to the preparation of medicines, and another room prepared for their reception; and that the contributors to the expense should manage the charity.

It was now expected, that the apothecaries would have undertaken the care of providing medicines; but they took another course. Thinking the whole design pernicious to their interest, they endeavoured to raise a faction against it in the college, and found some physicians mean enough to solicit their patronage, by betraying to them the counsels of the college. The greater part, however, enforced by a new edict, in 1694, the former order of 1687, and sent it to the mayor and aldermen, who appointed a committee to treat with the college, and settle the mode of administering the charity.

It was desired by the aldermen, that the testimonials of churchwardens and overseers should be admitted; and that all hired servants, and all apprentices to handicraftsmen, should be considered as *poor*. This, likewise, was granted by the college.

It was then considered who should distribute the medicines, and who should settle their prices. The physicians procured some apothecaries to undertake the dispensation, and offered that the warden and company of the apothecaries should adjust the price. This offer was rejected; and the apothecaries who had engaged to assist the charity were considered as traitors to the company, threatened with the imposition of troublesome offices, and deterred from the performance of their engagements. The apothecaries ventured upon publick opposition, and presented a kind of remonstrance against the design to the committee of the city, which the physicians condescended to confute; and, at last, the traders seem to have prevailed among the sons of trade; for the proposal of the college having been considered, a paper of approbation was drawn up, but postponed and forgotten.

The physicians still persisted; and, in 1696, a subscription was raised by themselves, according to an agreement prefixed to The Dispensary. The poor were, for a time, supplied with medicines; for how long a time, I know not. The medicinal charity, like others, began with ardour, but soon remitted, and, at last, died gradually away.

About the time of the subscription begins the action of The Dispensary. The poem, as its subject was present and popular, cooperated with passions and prejudices then prevalent, and, with such auxiliaries to its intrinsick merit, was universally and liberally applauded. It was on the side of charity

against the intrigues of interest, and of regular learning against licentious usurpation of medical authority; and was, therefore, naturally favoured by those who read and can judge of poetry.

In 1697, Garth spoke that which is now called the Harveian oration; which the authors of the Biographia mention with more praise than the passage quoted in their notes will fully justify. Garth, speaking of the mischiefs done by quacks, has these expressions: "Non tamen telis vulnerat ista agyrtarum colluvies, sed theriaca quadam magis perniciosa; non pyrio, sed pulvere nescio quo exotico certat; non globulis plumbeis, sed pilulis æque lethalibus interficit." This was certainly thought fine by the author, and is still admired by his biographer. In October, 1702, he became one of the censors of the college.

Garth, being an active and zealous whig, was a member of the Kit-cat club, and, by consequence, familiarly known to all the great men of that denomination. In 1710, when the government fell into other hands, he writ to lord Godolphin, on his dismission, a short poem, which was criticised in The Examiner, and so successfully either defended or excused by Mr. Addison, that, for the sake of the vindication, it ought to be preserved.

At the accession of the present family his merits were acknowledged and rewarded. He was knighted with the sword of his hero, Marlborough; and was made physician in ordinary to the king, and physician general to the army.

He then undertook an edition of Ovid's Metamorphoses, translated by several hands; which he recommended by a preface, written with more ostentation than ability; his notions are half-formed, and his materials immethodically confused. This was his last work. He died Jan. 18, 1717–18, and was buried at Harrow-on-the-Hill.

His personal character seems to have been social and liberal. He communicated himself through a very wide extent of acquaintance; and though firm in a party, at a time when firmness included virulence, yet he imparted his kindness to those who were not supposed to favour his principles. He was an early encourager of Pope, and was, at once, the friend of Addison and of Granville. He is accused of voluptuousness and irreligion; and Pope, who says, that "if ever there was a good christian, without knowing himself to be so, it was Dr. Garth," seems not able to deny what he is angry to hear, and loath to confess.

Pope afterwards declared himself convinced, that Garth died in the communion of the church of Rome, having been privately reconciled. It is observed by Lowth, that there is less distance than is thought between skepticism and popery; and that a mind, wearied with perpetual doubt, willingly seeks repose in the bosom of an infallible church.

His poetry has been praised, at least, equally to its merit. In The Dispensary there is a strain of smooth and free versification; but few lines are eminently elegant. No passages fall below mediocrity,

and few rise much above it. The plan seems formed without just proportion to the subject; the means and end have no necessary connexion. Resnel, in his Preface to Pope's Essay, remarks, that Garth exhibits no discrimination of characters; and that what any one says might, with equal propriety, have been said by another. The general design is, perhaps, open to criticism; but the composition can seldom be charged with inaccuracy or negligence. The author never slumbers in self-indulgence; his full vigour is always exerted; scarcely a line is left unfinished; nor is it easy to find an expression used by constraint, or a thought imperfectly expressed. It was remarked by Pope, that The Dispensary had been corrected in every edition, and that every change was an improvement. It appears, however, to want something of poetical ardour, and something of general delectation; and, therefore, since it has been no longer supported by accidental and extrinsick popularity, it has been scarcely able to support itself.

ROWE

NICHOLAS ROWE was born at Little Beckford, in Bedfordshire, in 1673. His family had long possessed a considerable estate, with a good house, at Lambertoun, in Devonshire[x]. The ancestor from whom he descended, in a direct line, received the arms borne by his descendants for his bravery in the holy war. His father, John Rowe, who was the first that quitted his paternal acres to practise any art of profit, professed the law, and published Benlow's and Dallison's Reports, in the reign of James the second, when in opposition to the notions, then diligently propagated, of dispensing power, he ventured to remark how low his authors rated the prerogative. He was made a sergeant, and died April 30, 1692. He was buried in the Temple church.

Nicholas was first sent to a private school at Highgate; and, being afterwards removed to Westminster, was, at twelve years[y], chosen one of the king's scholars. His master was Busby, who suffered none of his scholars to let their powers lie useless; and his exercises in several languages are said to have been written with uncommon degrees of excellence, and yet to have cost him very little labour.

At sixteen he had, in his father's opinion, made advances in learning sufficient to qualify him for the study of law, and was entered a student of the Middle Temple, where, for some time, he read statutes and reports with proficiency proportionate to the force of his mind, which was already such that he

[x] In the Villare, *Lamerton*. Dr. J.

[y] He was not elected till 1688. N.

endeavoured to comprehend law, not as a series of precedents, or collection of positive precepts, but as a system of rational government, and impartial justice.

When he was nineteen, he was, by the death of his father, left more to his own direction, and, probably, from that time suffered law gradually to give way to poetry[z]. At twenty-five he produced the Ambitious Step-Mother, which was received with so much favour, that he devoted himself, from that time, wholly to elegant literature.

His next tragedy, 1702, was Tamerlane, in which, under the name of Tamerlane, he intended to characterize king William, and Lewis the fourteenth under that of Bajazet. The virtues of Tamerlane seem to have been arbitrarily assigned him by his poet, for I know not that history gives any other qualities than those which make a conqueror. The fashion, however, of the time was, to accumulate upon Lewis all that can raise horrour and detestation; and whatever good was withheld from him, that it might not be thrown away, was bestowed upon king William.

This was the tragedy which Rowe valued most, and that which, probably by the help of political auxiliaries, excited most applause; but occasional poetry must often content itself with occasional praise. Tamerlane has for a long time been acted

[z] Sewell, in a life of Rowe, says, that he was called to the bar and kept chambers in one of the inns of court, till he had produced two plays; that is till 1702, at which time he was twenty-nine. M.

only once a year, on the night when king William landed. Our quarrel with Lewis has been long over; and it now gratifies neither zeal nor malice to see him painted with aggravated features, like a Saracen upon a sign.

The Fair Penitent, his next production, 1703, is one of the most pleasing tragedies on the stage, where it still keeps its turns of appearing, and probably will long keep them, for there is scarcely any work of any poet, at once, so interesting by the fable and so delightful by the language. The story is domestick, and, therefore, easily received by the imagination, and assimilated to common life; the diction is exquisitely harmonious, and soft or sprightly as occasion requires.

The character of Lothario seems to have been expanded by Richardson into Lovelace; but he has excelled his original in the moral effect of the fiction. Lothario, with gaiety which cannot be hated, and bravery which cannot be despised, retains too much of the spectator's kindness. It was in the power of Richardson alone to teach us, at once, esteem and detestation; to make virtuous resentment overpower all the benevolence which wit, elegance, and courage, naturally excite; and to lose, at last, the hero in the villain.

The fifth act is not equal to the former; the events of the drama are exhausted, and little remains but to talk of what is past. It has been observed that the title of the play does not sufficiently correspond with the behaviour of Calista, who, at last, shows

no evident signs of repentance, but may be reasonably suspected of feeling pain from detection rather than from guilt, and expresses more shame than sorrow, and more rage than shame.

His next, 1706, was Ulysses; which, with the common fate of mythological stories, is now generally neglected. We have been too early acquainted with the poetical heroes, to expect any pleasure from their revival; to show them as they have already been shown, is to disgust by repetition; to give them new qualities, or new adventures, is to offend by violating received notions.

The Royal Convert, 1708, seems to have a better claim to longevity. The fable is drawn from an obscure and barbarous age, to which fictions are most easily and properly adapted; for when objects are imperfectly seen, they easily take forms from imagination. The scene lies among our ancestors in our own country, and, therefore, very easily catches attention. Rodogune is a personage truly tragical, of high spirit, and violent passions, great with tempestuous dignity, and wicked with a soul that would have been heroick if it had been virtuous. The motto seems to tell that this play was not successful.

Rowe does not always remember what his characters require. In Tamerlane there is some ridiculous mention of the god of love; and Rodogune, a savage Saxon, talks of Venus, and the eagle that bears the thunder of Jupiter.

This play discovers its own date, by a prediction of the union, in imitation of Cranmer's prophetick

promises to Henry the eighth. The anticipated blessings of union are not very naturally introduced, nor very happily expressed.

He once, 1706, tried to change his hand. He ventured on a comedy, and produced The Biter; with which, though it was unfavourably treated by the audience, he was himself delighted; for he is said to have sat in the house laughing with great vehemence, whenever he had, in his own opinion, produced a jest. But, finding that he and the publick had no sympathy of mirth, he tried at lighter scenes no more.

After the Royal Convert, 1714, appeared Jane Shore, written, as its author professes, "in imitation of Shakespeare's style." In what he thought himself an imitator of Shakespeare, it is not easy to conceive. The numbers, the diction, the sentiments, and the conduct, every thing in which imitation can consist, are remote, in the utmost degree, from the manner of Shakespeare; whose dramas it resembles only as it is an English story, and as some of the persons have their names in history. This play, consisting chiefly of domestick scenes and private distress, lays hold upon the heart. The wife is forgiven, because she repents, and the husband is honoured, because he forgives. This, therefore, is one of those pieces which we still welcome on the stage.

His last tragedy, 1715, was Lady Jane Grey. This subject had been chosen by Mr. Smith, whose papers were put into Rowe's hands, such as he describes them in his preface. This play has, likewise,

sunk into oblivion. From this time he gave nothing more to the stage.

Being, by a competent fortune, exempted from any necessity of combating his inclination, he never wrote in distress, and, therefore, does not appear to have ever written in haste. His works were finished to his own approbation, and bear few marks of negligence or hurry. It is remarkable, that his prologues and epilogues are all his own, though he sometimes supplied others; he afforded help, but did not solicit it.

As his studies necessarily made him acquainted with Shakespeare, and acquaintance produced veneration, he undertook, 1709, an edition of his works, from which he neither received much praise, nor seems to have expected it; yet, I believe, those who compare it with former copies will find, that he has done more than he promised; and that, without the pomp of notes, or boasts of criticism, many passages are happily restored. He prefixed a life of the author, such as tradition, then almost expiring, could supply, and a preface[a], which cannot be said to discover much profundity or penetration. He, at least, contributed to the popularity of his author.

He was willing enough to improve his fortune by other arts than poetry. He was under secretary, for three years, when the duke of Queensberry was secretary of state, and afterwards applied to the earl of Oxford for some publick employment[b]. Oxford en-

[a] Mr. Rowe's preface, however, is not distinct, as it might be supposed from this passage, from the life. R.

[b] Spence.

joined him to study Spanish; and when, some time afterwards, he came again, and said that he had mastered it, dismissed him, with this congratulation: "Then, sir, I envy you the pleasure of reading Don Quixote in the original."

This story is sufficiently attested; but why Oxford, who desired to be thought a favourer of literature, should thus insult a man of acknowledged merit; or how Rowe, who was so keen a whig[c], that he did not willingly converse with men of the opposite party, could ask preferment from Oxford, it is not now possible to discover. Pope, who told the story, did not say on what occasion the advice was given; and, though he owned Rowe's disappointment, doubted whether any injury was intended him, but thought it rather lord Oxford's *odd way*.

It is likely that he lived on discontented through the rest of queen Anne's reign; but the time came, at last, when he found kinder friends. At the accession of king George he was made poet-laureate; I am afraid, by the ejection of poor Nahum Tate, who, 1716, died in the Mint, where he was forced to seek shelter by extreme poverty[d]. He was made, likewise, one of the land-surveyors of the customs of the port of London The prince of Wales chose him clerk of his council; and the lord chancellor Parker, as soon as he received the seals, appointed

[c] Spence.

[d] Jacob, who wrote only four years afterwards, says, that Tate had to write the first birth-day ode after the accession of king George, (Lives of the Poets, 11. 232.) so that he was probably not ejected to make rooom for Rowe, but made a vacancy by his death, in 1716. M.

him, unasked, secretary of the presentations. Such an accumulation of employments undoubtedly produced a very considerable revenue.

Having already translated some parts of Lucan's Pharsalia, which had been published in the Miscellanies, and doubtless received many praises, he undertook a version of the whole work, which he lived to finish, but not to publish. It seems to have been printed under the care of Dr. Welwood, who prefixed the author's life, in which is contained the following character:

"As to his person, it was graceful and well made; his face regular, and of a manly beauty. As his soul was well lodged, so its rational and animal faculties excelled in a high degree. He had a quick and fruitful invention, a deep penetration, and a large compass of thought, with singular dexterity and easiness in making his thoughts to be understood. He was master of most parts of polite learning, especially the classical authors, both Greek and Latin; understood the French, Italian, and Spanish languages; and spoke the first fluently, and the other two tolerably well.

"He had likewise read most of the Greek and Roman histories in their original languages, and most that are wrote in English, French, Italian, and Spanish. He had a good taste in philosophy; and, having a firm impression of religion upon his mind, he took great delight in divinity and ecclesiastical history, in both which he made great advances in the times he retired into the country, which

were frequent. He expressed, on all occasions, his full persuasion of the truth of revealed religion; and being a sincere member of the established church himself, he pitied, but condemned not, those that dissented from it. He abhorred the principles of persecuting men upon the account of their opinions in religion; and, being strict in his own, he took it not upon him to censure those of another persuasion. His conversation was pleasant, witty, and learned, without the least tincture of affectation or pedantry; and his inimitable manner of diverting and enlivening the company made it impossible for any one to be out of humour when he was in it. Envy and detraction seemed to be entirely foreign to his constitution; and whatever provocations he met with at any time, he passed them over without the least thought of resentment or revenge. As Homer had a Zoilus, so Mr. Rowe had sometimes his; for there were not wanting malevolent people, and pretenders to poetry too, that would now and then bark at his best performances; but he was conscious of his own genius, and had so much good-nature as to forgive them; nor could he ever be tempted to return them an answer.

"The love of learning and poetry made him not the less fit for business, and nobody applied himself closer to it, when it required his attendance. The late duke of Queensberry, when he was secretary of state, made him his secretary for publick affairs; and when that truly great man came to know him well, he was never so pleased as when Mr. Rowe was in

his company. After the duke's death all avenues were stopped to his preferment; and, during the rest of that reign, he passed his time with the muses and his books, and sometimes the conversation of his friends.

"When he had just got to be easy in his fortune, and was in a fair way to make it better, death swept him away, and in him deprived the world of one of the best men, as well as one of the best geniuses of the age. He died like a christian and a philosopher, in charity with all mankind, and with an absolute resignation to the will of God. He kept up his good-humour to the last; and took leave of his wife and friends immediately before his last agony, with the same tranquillity of mind, and the same indifference for life, as though he had been upon taking but a short journey. He was twice married; first to a daughter of Mr. Parsons, one of the auditors of the revenue; and afterwards to a daughter of Mr. Devenish, of a good family in Dorsetshire[e]. By the first he had a son; and by the second a daughter, married

[e] Mrs. Anne Deanes Devenish, of a very good family in Dorsetshire, was first married to Mr. Rowe the poet, by whom she was left in not abounding circumstances, was afterwards married to colonel Deanes, by whom also she was left a widow; and upon the family estate, which was a good one, coming to her by the death of a near relation, she resumed the family name of Devenish. She was a clever, sensible, agreeable woman, had seen a great deal of the world, had kept much good company, and was distinguished by a happy mixture of elegance and sense in every thing she said or did. Bishop Newton's Life by himself p. 32.

About the year 1738, he, by her desire, collected and published Mr. Rowe's works, with a dedication to Frederick prince of Wales. Mrs. Devenish, I believe, died about the year 1758. She was, I think, the person meant by Pope in the line,

Each widow asks it for her own good man. M.

afterwards to Mr. Fane. He died the sixth of December, 1718, in the forty-fifth year of his age; and was buried the nineteenth of the same month in Westminster Abbey, in the aisle where many of our English poets are interred, over against Chaucer, his body being attended by a select number of his friends, and the dean and choir officiating at the funeral."

To this character, which is apparently given with the fondness of a friend, may be added the testimony of Pope, who says, in a letter to Blount: "Mr. Rowe accompanied me, and passed a week in the forest. I need not tell you how much a man of his turn entertained me; but I must acquaint you, there is a vivacity and gaiety of disposition, almost peculiar to him, which makes it impossible to part from him without that uneasiness which generally succeeds all our pleasure."

Pope has left behind him another mention of his companion, less advantageous, which is thus reported by Dr. Warburton.

"Rowe, in Mr. Pope's opinion, maintained a decent character, but had no heart. Mr. Addison was justly offended with some behaviour which arose from that want, and estranged himself from him; which Rowe felt very severely. Mr. Pope, their common friend, knowing this, took an opportunity, at some juncture of Mr. Addison's advancement, to tell him how poor Rowe was grieved at his displeasure, and what satisfaction he expressed at Mr. Addison's good fortune, which he expressed so naturally,

that he (Mr. Pope) could not but think him sincere. Mr. Addison replied, 'I do not suspect that he feigned; but the levity of his heart is such, that he is struck with any new adventure; and it would affect him just in the same manner, if he heard I was going to be hanged.' Mr. Pope said he could not deny but Mr. Addison understood Rowe well[f]."

This censure time has not left us the power of confirming or refuting; but observation daily shows, that much stress is not to be laid on hyperbolical accusations, and pointed sentences, which even he that utters them desires to be applauded rather than credited. Addison can hardly be supposed to have meant all that he said. Few characters can bear the microscopick scrutiny of wit quickened by anger; and, perhaps, the best advice to authors would be, that they should keep out of the way of one another.

Rowe is chiefly to be considered as a tragick writer

[f] Sewell, who was acquainted with Rowe, speaks very highly of him: "I dare not venture to give you his character, either as a companion, a friend, or a poet. It may be enough to say, that all good and learned men loved him; that his conversation either struck out mirth, or promoted learning or honour wherever he went; that the openness of a gentleman, the unstudied eloquence of a scholar, and the perfect freedom of an Englishman, attended him in all his actions." Life of Rowe prefixed to his poems. M.

That the author of Jane Shore should have no heart; that Addison should assert this, whilst he admitted, in the same breath, that Rowe was grieved at his displeasure; and that Pope should coincide in such an opinion, and yet should have stated in his epitaph on Rowe,

'That never heart felt passion more sincere,'

are circumstances that cannot be admitted, without sacrificing to the veracity of an anecdote, the character and consistency of all the persons introduced. Roscoe's Life of Pope, prefixed to his works, vol. i. p. 250.

and a translator. In his attempt at comedy he failed so ignominiously, that his Biter is not inserted in his works; and his occasional poems and short compositions are rarely worthy of either praise or censure; for they seem the casual sports of a mind seeking rather to amuse its leisure than to exercise its powers.

In the construction of his dramas, there is not much art; he is not a nice observer of the unities. He extends time and varies place as his convenience requires. To vary the place is not, in my opinion, any violation of nature, if the change be made between the acts; for it is no less easy for the spectator to suppose himself at Athens in the second act, than at Thebes in the first; but to change the scene, as is done by Rowe, in the middle of an act, is to add more acts to the play, since an act is so much of the business as is transacted without interruption. Rowe, by this license, easily extricates himself from difficulties; as, in Jane Grey, when we have been terrified with all the dreadful pomp of publick execution, and are wondering how the heroine or the poet will proceed, no sooner has Jane pronounced some prophetick rhymes, than—pass and be gone—the scene closes, and Pembroke and Gardiner are turned out upon the stage.

I know not that there can be found in his plays any deep search into nature, any accurate discriminations of kindred qualities, or nice display of passion in its progress; all is general and undefined. Nor does he much interest or affect the auditor, ex-

cept in Jane Shore, who is always seen and heard with pity. Alicia is a character of empty noise, with no resemblance to real sorrow, or to natural madness.

Whence, then, has Rowe his reputation? From the reasonableness and propriety of some of his scenes, from the elegance of his diction, and the suavity of his verse. He seldom moves either pity or terrour, but he often elevates the sentiments; he seldom pierces the breast, but he always delights the ear, and often improves the understanding.

His translation of the Golden Verses, and of the first book of Quillet's poem, have nothing in them remarkable. The Golden Verses are tedious.

The version of Lucan is one of the greatest productions of English poetry; for there is, perhaps, none that so completely exhibits the genius and spirit of the original. Lucan is distinguished by a kind of dictatorial or philosophick dignity, rather, as Quintilian observes, declamatory than poetical; full of ambitious morality and pointed sentences, comprised in vigorous and animated lines. This character Rowe has very diligently and successfully preserved. His versification, which is such as his contemporaries practised, without any attempt at innovation or improvement, seldom wants either melody or force. His author's sense is sometimes a little diluted by additional infusions, and sometimes weakened by too much expansion. But such faults are to be expected in all translations, from the constraint of measures and dissimilitude of languages.

The Pharsalia of Rowe deserves more notice than it obtains, and, as it is more read, will be more esteemed[g].

[g] Rowe's Lucan, however, has not escaped without censure. Bentley has criticised it with great severity in his Philoleutheros Lipsiensis. J. B.

The life of Rowe is a very remarkable instance of the uncommon strength of Dr. Johnson's memory. When I received from him the MS. he complacently observed, "that the criticism was tolerably well done, considering that he had not read one of Rowe's plays for thirty years!" N.

ADDISON

JOSEPH ADDISON was born on the 1st of May, 1672, at Milston, of which his father, Launcelot Addison, was then rector, near Ambrosebury, in Wiltshire, and appearing weak and unlikely to live, he was christened the same day[h]. After the usual domestick education, which, from the character of his father, may be reasonably supposed to have given him strong impressions of piety, he was committed to the care of Mr. Naish, at Ambrosebury, and afterwards of Mr. Taylor, at Salisbury.

Not to name the school or the masters of men illustrious for literature, is a kind of historical fraud, by which honest fame is injuriously diminished: I would, therefore, trace him through the whole process of his education. In 1683, in the beginning of his twelfth year, his father, being made dean of

[h]Mr. Tyers says, he was actually laid out for dead, as soon as he was born. Addisoniana, ii. 218.

A writer, who signs himself T. J. informed Dr. Birch, (Gen. Dict. i. 62.) that Mr. Addison's mother was Jane Gulstone, a circumstance that should not have been omitted. Dr. Launcelot Addison had by his wife six children: 1. Jane, born April 23, 1671. 2. Joseph, 1st May, 1672. 3. Gulstone, in April, 1673. 4. Dorothy, in May, 1674. 5. Anne, in April, 1676; and 6. Launcelot, in 1680. Both Gulstone and Launcelot, was a fellow of Magdalen college, Oxford, were reputed to be very well skilled in the classicks, and in polite literature. Dr. Addison's living at Milston was 120*l.* per annum; and after his death his son Joseph was sued for dilapidations by the next incumbent. The writer abovementioned informed Dr. Birch, that "there was a tradition at Milston, that when at school in the country, (probably at Ambrosebury,) having committed some slight fault, he was so afraid of being corrected for it, that he ran away from his father's house, and fled into the fields, where he lived upon fruits, and took up his lodging in a hollow tree, till, upon the publication of a reward to whoever should find him, he was discovered and restored to his parents." M.

Lichfield, naturally carried his family to his new residence, and, I believe, placed him, for some time, probably not long, under Mr. Shaw, then master of the school at Lichfield, father of the late Dr. Peter Shaw. Of this interval his biographers have given no account, and I know it only from a story of a barring-out, told me, when I was a boy, by Andrew Corbet, of Shropshire, who had heard it from Mr. Pigot his uncle.

The practice of barring-out was a savage license, practised in many schools to the end of the last century, by which the boys, when the periodical vacation drew near, growing petulant at the approach of liberty, some days before the time of regular recess, took possession of the school, of which they barred the doors, and bade their master defiance from the windows. It is not easy to suppose that on such occasions the master would do more than laugh; yet, if tradition may be credited, he often struggled hard to force or surprise the garrison. The master, when Pigot was a schoolboy, was barred-out at Lichfield; and the whole operation, as he said, was planned and conducted by Addison.

To judge better of the probability of this story, I have inquired when he was sent to the Chartreux; but, as he was not one of those who enjoyed the founder's benefaction, there is no account preserved of his admission. At the school of the Chartreux, to which he was removed either from that of Salisbury or Lichfield, he pursued his juvenile studies

under the care of Dr. Ellis, and contracted that intimacy with sir Richard Steele, which their joint labours have so effectually recorded[i].

Of this memorable friendship the greater praise must be given to Steele. It is not hard to love those from whom nothing can be feared; and Addison never considered Steele as a rival; but Steele lived, as he confesses, under an habitual subjection to the predominating genius of Addison, whom he always mentioned with reverence, and treated with obsequiousness.

Addison[k], who knew his own dignity, could not always forbear to show it, by playing a little upon his admirer; but he was in no danger of retort: his jests were endured without resistance or resentment.

But the sneer of jocularity was not the worst. Steele, whose imprudence of generosity, or vanity of profusion, kept him always incurably necessitous, upon some pressing exigence, in an evil hour, borrowed a hundred pounds of his friend, probably without much purpose of repayment; but Addison, who seems to have had other notions of a hundred pounds, grew impatient of delay, and reclaimed his loan by an execution. Steele felt, with great

[i] "At the Charter-house (says Oldmixon, who was personally acquainted with Addison, and as a zealous whig, probably encouraged by him) he made acquaintance with two persons, for whom he had ever after an entire friendship, Stephen Clay, esq. of the Inner Temple, author of the epistle in verse, from the elector of Bavaria to the French king after the battle of Ramilies; and sir Richard Steele, whom he served both with his pen and purse." Hist. of England, xi. 632. M.

[k] Spence.

sensibility, the obduracy of his creditor, but with emotions of sorrow rather than of anger[l].

In 1687 he was entered into Queen's college in Oxford, where, in 1689, the accidental perusal of some Latin verses gained him the patronage of Dr. Lancaster, afterwards provost of Queen's college; by whose recommendation he was elected into Magdalen college as a demy, a term by which that society denominates those which are elsewhere called scholars; young men, who partake of the founder's benefaction, and succeed in their order to vacant fellowships[m].

Here he continued to cultivate poetry and criticism, and grew first eminent by his Latin compositions, which are, indeed, entitled to particular praise. He has not confined himself to the imitation of any ancient author, but has formed his style from the general language, such as a diligent perusal of the productions of different ages happened to supply.

His Latin compositions seem to have had much

[l] This fact was communicated to Johnson, in my hearing, by a person of unquestionable veracity, but whose name I am not at liberty to mention. He had it, as he told us, from lady Primrose, to whom Steele related it with tears in his eyes. The late Dr. Stinton confirmed it to me, by saying, that he had heard it from Mr. Hooke, author of the Roman History; and he, from Mr. Pope. H.

See in Steele's Epistolary Correspondence, 1809, vol. i. pp. 208, 356, this transaction somewhat differently related. N.

The compiler of Addisoniana is of opinion, that Addison's conduct on this occasion was dictated by the kindest motives; and that the step apparently so severe, was designed to awaken him, if possible, to a sense of the impropriety of his mode and habits of life. Ed.

[m] He took the degree of M. A. Feb. 14, 1693. N.

of his fondness, for he collected a second volume of the Musæ Anglicanæ, perhaps, for a convenient receptacle, in which all his Latin pieces are inserted, and where his poem on the Peace has the first place. He afterwards presented the collection to Boileau, who, from that time, "conceived," says Tickell, "an opinion of the English genius for poetry." Nothing is better known of Boileau, than that he had an injudicious and peevish contempt of modern Latin, and, therefore, his profession of regard was, probably, the effect of his civility rather than approbation.

Three of his Latin poems are upon subjects on which, perhaps, he would not have ventured to have written in his own language. The Battle of the Pygmies and Cranes; the Barometer; and a Bowling-green. When the matter is low or scanty, a dead language, in which nothing is mean because nothing is familiar, affords great conveniencies; and, by the sonorous magnificence of Roman syllables, the writer conceals penury of thought and want of novelty, often from the reader, and often from himself.

In his twenty-second year he first showed his power of English poetry by some verses addressed to Dryden; and soon afterwards published a translation of the greater part of the fourth Georgick upon bees; after which, says Dryden, "my latter swarm is hardly worth the hiving."

About the same time he composed the arguments prefixed to the several books of Dryden's Virgil; and produced an Essay on the Georgicks, juvenile,

superficial, and uninstructive, without much either of the scholar's learning or the critick's penetration.

His next paper of verses contained a character of the principal English poets, inscribed to Henry Sacheverell, who was then, if not a poet, a writer of verses[n]; as is shown by his version of a small part of Virgil's Georgicks, published in the Miscellanies; and a Latin Encomium on queen Mary, in the Musæ Anglicanæ. These verses exhibit all the fondness of friendship; but, on one side or the other, friendship was afterwards too weak for the malignity of faction.

In this poem is a very confident and discriminative character of Spenser, whose work he had then never read[o]. So little, sometimes, is criticism the effect of judgment. It is necessary to inform the reader, that about this time he was introduced by Congreve to Montague, then chancellor of the exchequer[p]: Addison was then learning the trade of a

[n] A letter which I found among Dr. Johnson's papers, dated in January, 1784, from a lady in Wiltshire, contains a discovery of some importance in literary history, viz. that by the initials H. S. prefixed to the poem, we are not to understand the famous Dr. Henry Sacheverell, whose trial is the most remarkable incident in his life. The information thus communicated is, that the verses in question were not an address to the famous Dr. Sacheverell, but to a very ingenious gentleman of the same name, who died young, supposed to be a Manksman, for that he wrote the history of the Isle of Man. That this person left his papers to Mr. Addison, and had formed a plan of a tragedy upon the death of Socrates. The lady says, she had this information from a Mr. Stephens, who was a fellow of Merton college, a contemporary and intimate with Mr. Addison in Oxford, who died near fifty years ago, a prebendary of Winchester. H.

[o] Spence.

[p] A writer already mentioned, J. P. (Gen. Dict. *ut supra*,) asserts that his acquaintance with Montague commenced at Oxford: but for this there is no foundation. Mr. Montague was bred at Trinity college, Cambridge.

courtier, and subjoined Montague, as a poetical name to those of Cowley and Dryden.

By the influence of Mr. Montague, concurring, according to Tickell, with his natural modesty, he was diverted from his original design of entering into holy orders. Montague alleged the corruption of men who engaged in civil employments without liberal education; and declared, that, though he was represented as an enemy to the church, he would never do it any injury but by withholding Addison from it.

Soon after, in 1695, he wrote a poem to king William, with a rhyming introduction, addressed to lord Somers[q]. King William had no regard to elegance or literature; his study was only war; yet by a choice of ministers, whose disposition was very different from his own, he procured, without intention, a very liberal patronage to poetry. Addison was caressed both by Somers and Montague.

In 1697 appeared his Latin verses on the Peace of Ryswick, which he dedicated to Montague, and which was afterwards called, by Smith, "the best Latin poem since the Æneid." Praise must not be too rigorously examined; but the performance cannot be denied to be vigorous and elegant.

Having yet no publick employment, he obtained, in 1699, a pension of three hundred pounds a year, that he might be enabled to travel. He staid a year

[q] Lord Somers, on this poem being presented to him, according to Tickell, sent to Addison to desire his acquaintance. According to Oldmixon, he was introduced to him by Tonson. M.

at Blois[r], probably to learn the French language; and then proceeded in his journey to Italy, which he surveyed with the eyes of a poet.

While he was travelling at leisure, he was far from being idle; for he not only collected his observations on the country, but found time to write his Dialogues on Medals, and four acts of Cato. Such, at least, is the relation of Tickell. Perhaps he only collected his materials, and formed his plan.

Whatever were his other employments in Italy, he there wrote the letter to lord Halifax, which is justly considered as the most elegant, if not the most sublime, of his poetical productions[s]. But in about two years he found it necessary to hasten home; being, as Swift informs us, distressed by indigence, and compelled to become the tutor of a travelling squire, because his pension was not remitted[t].

[r] Spence.

[s] See Swift's libel on Dr. Delany. Addison's distress for money commenced with the death of king William, which happened in March, 1702. In June, 1703, he was at Rotterdam, and seems then to have done with his *squire:* for in that month the duke of Somerset wrote a letter to old Jacob Tonson, (of which I have a copy,) proposing that Addison should be tutor to his son, (who was then going abroad.) "Neither lodging, diet, or travelling," says the duke, "shall cost him sixpence: and over and above that, my son shall present him, at the year's end, with a hundred guineas, as long as he is pleased to continue in that service." Mr. Addison declined this *magnificent* offer in these words, as appears from another letter of the duke's to Tonson: "As for the recompence that is proposed to me, I must confess I can by no means see my account in it." M.

[t] In this letter he uses the phrase *classick ground*, which has since become so common, but never had been employed before: it was ridiculed by some of his contemporary writers (I forgot which) as very quaint and affected. M.

At his return he published his travels, with a dedication to lord Somers. As his stay in foreign countries was short[u], his observations are such as might be supplied by a hasty view, and consist chiefly in comparisons of the present face of the country with the descriptions left us by the Roman poets, from whom he made preparatory collections, though he might have spared the trouble, had he known that such collections had been made twice before by Italian authors.

The most amusing passage of his book is his account of the minute republick of San Marino: of many parts it is not a very severe censure to say, that they might have been written at home. His elegance of language, and variegation of prose and verse, however, gains upon the reader; and the book, though awhile neglected, became, in time, so much the favourite of the publick, that before it was reprinted it rose to five times its price.

When he returned to England, in 1702, with a meanness of appearance which gave testimony of the difficulties to which he had been reduced, he found his old patrons out of power, and was, therefore, for a time, at full leisure for the cultivation of his mind; and a mind so cultivated gives reason to believe that little time was lost[v].

[u] It is incorrect that Addison's stay in foreign countries was but short. He went to travel in 1700, and did not return till the latter end of 1703; so that he was abroad near four years. M.

[v] Addison's father, who was then dean of Lichfield, died in April, 1703; a circumstance which should have been mentioned on his tomb at Lichfield: he is said to have been seventy-one.

But he remained not long neglected or useless. The victory at Blenheim, 1704, spread triumph and confidence over the nation; and lord Godolphin, lamenting to lord Halifax, that it had not been celebrated in a manner equal to the subject, desired him to propose it to some better poet. Halifax told him, that there was no encouragement for genius; that worthless men were unprofitably enriched with publick money, without any care to find or employ those whose appearance might do honour to their country. To this Godolphin replied, that such abuses should, in time, be rectified; and that, if a man could be found capable of the task then proposed, he should not want an ample recompense. Halifax then named Addison; but required that the treasurer should apply to him in his own person. Godolphin sent the message by Mr. Boyle, afterwards lord Carleton; and Addison, having undertaken the work, communicated it to the treasurer, while it was yet advanced no farther than the simile of the angel, and was immediately rewarded by succeeding Mr. Locke in the place of commissioner of appeals.

In the following year he was at Hanover with lord Halifax: and the year after was made undersecretary of state, first to sir Charles Hedges, and in a few months more to the earl of Sunderland.

About this time the prevalent taste for Italian operas inclined him to try what would be the effect of a musical drama in our own language. He, therefore, wrote the opera of Rosamond, which, when ex-

hibited on the stage, was either hissed or neglected[w]; but, trusting that the readers would do him more justice, he published it, with an inscription to the dutchess of Marlborough; a woman without skill, or pretensions to skill, in poetry or literature. His dedication was, therefore, an instance of servile absurdity, to be exceeded only by Joshua Barnes's dedication of a Greek Anacreon to the duke.

His reputation had been somewhat advanced by the Tender Husband, a comedy which Steele dedicated to him with a confession, that he owed to him several of the most successful scenes. To this play Addison supplied a prologue.

When the marquis of Wharton was appointed lord lieutenant of Ireland[x], Addison attended him as his secretary; and was made keeper of the records in Birmingham's tower, with a salary of three hundred pounds a year. The office was little more than nominal, and the salary was augmented for his accommodation.

Interest and faction allow little to the operation of particular dispositions, or private opinions Two men of personal characters more opposite than those of Wharton and Addison could not easily be brought together. Wharton was impious, profligate, and shameless, without regard, or appearance of regard, to right and wrong: whatever is contrary to this

[w] Rosamond was first exhibited, March 4th, 1707, and, after three representations, was laid aside. M.

[x] Thomas *earl* of Wharton was constituted lord lieutenant of Ireland Dec. 4, 1708, and went there in April, 1709. He was not made a *marquis* till Dec. 1714. M.

may be said of Addison; but, as agents of a party, they were connected, and how they adjusted their other sentiments we cannot know.

Addison must, however, not be too hastily condemned. It is not necessary to refuse benefits from a bad man, when the acceptance implies no approbation of his crimes; nor has the subordinate officer any obligation to examine the opinions or conduct of those under whom he acts, except that he may not be made the instrument of wickedness. It is reasonable to suppose, that Addison counteracted, as far as he was able, the malignant and blasting influence of the lieutenant; and that, at least, by his intervention some good was done, and some mischief prevented.

When he was in office, he made a law to himself, as Swift has recorded, never to remit his regular fees in civility to his friends: "for," said he, "I may have a hundred friends; and, if my fee be two guineas, I shall, by relinquishing my right, lose two hundred guineas, and no friend gain more than two; there is, therefore, no proportion between the good imparted and the evil suffered."

He was in Ireland when Steele, without any communication of his design, began the publication of the Tatler; but he was not long concealed: by inserting a remark on Virgil, which Addison had given him, he discovered himself. It is, indeed, not easy for any man to write upon literature, or common life, so as not to make himself known to those with whom he familiarly converses, and who are ac-

quainted with his track of study, his favourite topicks, his peculiar notions, and his habitual phrases.

If Steele desired to write in secret, he was not lucky; a single month detected him. His first Tatler was published April 12, 1709; and Addison's contribution appeared May 26. Tickell observes, that the Tatler began, and was concluded without his concurrence. This is, doubtless, literally true; but the work did not suffer much by his unconsciousness of its commencement, or his absence at its cessation; for he continued his assistance to December 23, and the paper stopped on January 2, 1710–11. He did not distinguish his pieces by any signature; and I know not whether his name was not kept secret till the papers were collected into volumes.

To the Tatler, in about two months, succeeded the Spectator[y]; a series of essays of the same kind, but written with less levity, upon a more regular plan, and published daily. Such an undertaking showed the writers not to distrust their own copiousness of materials or facility of composition, and their performance justified their confidence. They found, however, in their progress, many auxiliaries. To attempt a single paper was no terrifying labour; many pieces were offered, and many were received.

Addison had enough of the zeal of party; but Steele had, at that time, almost nothing else. The

[y] The first number of the Tatler was published April 12, 1709. The last (271) Jan. 2, 1710–11. The first number of the Spectator appeared March 1, 1710–11, and No. 555, which is the last of the seventh volume, was published Dec. 6, 1712. The paper was then discontinued, and was recommenced, June 18, 1714, when No. 556 appeared. From thence, to No. 635 inclusive, forms the eight volume. M.

Spectator, in one of the first papers, showed the political tenets of its authors; but a resolution was soon taken, of courting general approbation by general topicks, and subjects on which faction had produced no diversity of sentiments; such as literature, morality, and familiar life. To this practice they adhered with few deviations. The ardour of Steele once broke out in praise of Marlborough; and when Dr. Fleetwood prefixed to some sermons a preface, overflowing with whiggish opinions, that it might be read by the queen[z], it was reprinted in the Spectator.

To teach the minuter decencies and inferiour duties, to regulate the practice of daily conversation, to correct those depravities which are rather ridiculous than criminal, and remove those grievances which, if they produce no lasting calamities, impress hourly vexation, was first attempted by Casa in his book of Manners, and Castiglione in his Courtier; two books yet celebrated in Italy for purity and elegance, and which, if they are now less read, are neglected only because they have effected that reformation which their authors intended, and their precepts now are no longer wanted. Their usefulness to the age in which they were written is sufficiently attested by the translations which almost all the nations of Europe were in haste to obtain.

This species of instruction was continued, and

[z] This particular nunber of the Spectator, it is said, was not published till twelve o'clock, that it might come out precisely at the hour of her majesty's breakfast, and that no time might be left for deliberating about serving it up with that meal, as usual. See the edition of the Tatler with notes, vol. vi. No. 271, note; p. 462, &c. N.

perhaps advanced, by the French; among whom la Bruyère's Manners of the Age, though, as Boileau remarked, it is written without connexion, certainly deserves great praise, for liveliness of description, and justness of observation.

Before the Tatler and Spectator, if the writers for the theatre are excepted, England had no masters of common life. No writers had yet undertaken to reform either the savageness of neglect, or the impertinence of civility; to show when to speak, or to be silent; how to refuse, or how to comply. We had many books to teach us our more important duties, and to settle opinions in philosophy or politicks; but an Arbiter Elegantiarum, a judge of propriety, was yet wanting, who should survey the track of daily conversation, and free it from thorns and prickles, which tease the passer, through they do not wound him.

For this purpose nothing is so proper as the frequent publication of short papers, which we read not as study but amusement. If the subject be slight, the treatise, likewise, is short. The busy may find time, and the idle may find patience.

This mode of conveying cheap and easy knowledge began among us in the civil war[a], when it was

[a] Newspapers appear to have had an earlier date than here assigned. Cleiveland, in his Character of a London Diurnal, says, "the original sinner of this kind was Dutch; Gallo-belgicus the Protoplast, and the Modern Mercuries but Hans en kelders." Some intelligence given by Mercurius Gallo-belgicus is mentioned in Carew's Survey of Cornwall, p. 126, originally published in 1602. These vehicles of information are often mentioned in the plays of James and Charles the first. R.

See Idler, No. 7, and note; and Idler, No. 40, and note. Ed.

much the interest of either party to raise and fix the prejudices of the people. At that time appeared Mercurius Aulicus, Mercurius Rusticus, and Mercurius Civicus. It is said, that when any title grew popular, it was stolen by the antagonist, who, by this stratagem, conveyed his notions to those who would not have received him, had he not worn the appearance of a friend. The tumult of those unhappy days left scarcely any man leisure to treasure up occasional compositions; and so much were they neglected, that a complete collection is nowhere to be found.

These Mercuries were succeeded by l'Estrange's Observator; and that by Lesley's Rehearsal, and, perhaps, by others; but hitherto nothing had been conveyed to the people, in this commodious manner, but controversy relating to the church or state; of which they taught many to talk, whom they could not teach to judge.

It has been suggested that the Royal Society was instituted soon after the restoration, to divert the attention of the people from publick discontent. The Tatler and Spectator had the same tendency; they were published at a time when two parties, loud, restless, and violent, each with plausible declarations, and each, perhaps, without any distinct termination of its views, were agitating the nation; to minds heated with political contest they supplied cooler and more inoffensive reflections; and it is said by Addison, in a subsequent work, that they had a perceptible influence upon the conversation of that

time, and taught the frolick and the gay to unite merriment with decency; an effect which they can never wholly lose, while they continue to be among the first books by which both sexes are initiated in the elegancies of knowledge.

The Tatler and Spectator adjusted, like Casa, the unsettled practice of daily intercourse by propriety and politeness; and, like la Bruyère, exhibited the characters and manners of the age. The personages introduced in these papers were not merely ideal; they were then known and conspicuous in various stations. Of the Tatler this is told by Steele in his last paper; and of the Spectator by Budgel, in the preface to Theophrastus, a book which Addison has recommended, and which he was suspected to have revised, if he did not write it. Of those portraits, which may be supposed to be sometimes embellished, and sometimes aggravated, the originals are now partly known and partly forgotten.

But to say that they united the plans of two or three eminent writers, is to give them but a small part of their due praise; they superadded literature and criticism, and sometimes towered far above their predecessors; and taught, with great justness of argument and dignity of language, the most important duties and sublime truths.

All these topicks were happily varied with elegant fictions and refined allegories, and illuminated with different changes of style and felicities of invention.

It is recorded by Budgel, that, of the characters feigned or exhibited in the Spectator, the favourite

of Addison was sir Roger de Coverley, of whom he had formed a very delicate and discriminated idea[b], which he would not suffer to be violated; and, therefore, when Steele had shown him innocently picking up a girl in the temple, and taking her to a tavern, he drew upon himself so much of his friend's indignation, that he was forced to appease him by a promise of forebearing sir Roger for the time to come.

The reason which induced Cervantes to bring his hero to the grave, "para mi solo nacio don Quixote, y yo para el," made Addison declare, with an undue vehemence of expression, that he would kill sir Roger; being of opinion that they were born for one another, and that any other hand would do him wrong.

It may be doubted whether Addison ever filled up his original delineation. He describes his knight as having his imagination somewhat warped; but of this perversion he has made very little use. The irregularities in sir Roger's conduct seem not so much the effects of a mind deviating from the beaten track of life, by the perpetual pressure of some overwhelming idea, as of habitual rusticity, and that negligence which solitary grandeur naturally generates.

The variable weather of the mind, the flying vapours of incipient madness, which, from time to

[b] The errors in this account are explained at considerable length in the preface to the Spectator, prefixed to the edition in the British Essayists. The original delineation of sir Roger undoubtedly belongs to Steele. See, however, Addisoniana, vol. i.

time, cloud reason, without eclipsing it, it requires so much nicety to exhibit, that Addison seems to have been deterred from prosecuting his own design.

To sir Roger, who, as a country gentleman, appears to be a tory, or, as it is gently expressed, an adherent to the landed interest, is opposed sir Andrew Freeport, a new man, a wealthy merchant, zealous for the moneyed interest, and a whig. Of this contrariety of opinions, it is probable more consequences were at first intended, than could be produced when the resolution was taken to exclude party from the paper. Sir Andrew does but little, and that little seems not to have pleased Addison, who, when he dismissed him from the club, changed his opinions. Steele had made him, in the true spirit of unfeeling commerce, declare that he "would not build an hospital for idle people;" but at last he buys land, settles in the country, and builds not a manufactory, but an hospital for twelve old husbandmen, for men with whom a merchant has little acquaintance, and whom he commonly considers with little kindness.

Of essays thus elegant, thus instructive, and thus commodiously distributed, it is natural to suppose the approbation general, and the sale numerous. I once heard it observed, that the sale may be calculated by the product of the tax, related in the last number to produce more than twenty pounds a week, and, therefore, stated at one-and-twenty pounds, or three pounds ten shillings a day: this, at

a half-penny a paper, will give sixteen hundred and eighty[c] for the daily number.

This sale is not great; yet this, if Swift be credited, was likely to grow less; for he declares that the Spectator, whom he ridicules for his endless mention of the *fair sex*, had, before his recess, wearied his readers.

The next year, 1713, in which Cato came upon the stage, was the grand climaterick of Addison's reputation. Upon the death of Cato, he had, as is said, planned a tragedy in the time of his travels[d], and had, for several years, the first four acts finished, which were shown to such as were likely to spread their admiration. They were seen by Pope, and by Cibber, who relates that Steele, when he took back the copy, told him, in the despicable cant of literary modesty, that, whatever spirit his friend had shown in the composition, he doubted whether he would have courage sufficient to expose it to the censure of a British audience.

The time, however, was now come, when those, who affected to think liberty in danger, affected,

[c] That this calculation is not exaggerated, that it is even much below the real number, see the notes on the Tatler, edit. 1786, vol. vi. 452. N.— See likewise prefatory notice to the Rambler, vol. ii. p. viii. of the present edition. Ed.

[d] Tickell says, "he took up a design of writing a play upon this subject when he was at the university, and even attempted something in it then, though not a line as it now stands. The work was performed by him in his travels, and retouched in England, without any formed design of bringing it on the stage." Cibber (Apol. 377.) says, that in 1704 he had the pleasure of reading the first four acts of Cato (which were all that were then written) privately with sir Richard Steele: and Steele told him they were written in Italy. M.

likewise, to think that a stage-play might preserve it; and Addison was importuned, in the name of the tutelary deities of Britain, to show his courage and his zeal by finishing his design.

To resume his work he seemed perversely and unaccountably unwilling; and by a request, which, perhaps, he wished to be denied, desired Mr. Hughes to add a fifth act[e]. Hughes supposed him serious; and, undertaking the supplement, brought, in a few days, some scenes for his examination; but he had, in the mean time, gone to work himself, and produced half an act, which he afterwards completed, but with brevity irregularly disproportionate to the foregoing parts, like a task performed with reluctance, and hurried to its conclusion.

It may yet be doubted whether Cato was made publick by any change of the author's purpose; for Dennis charged him with raising prejudices in his own favour by false positions of preparatory criticism, and with "poisoning the town" by contradicting, in the Spectator, the established rule of poetical justice, because his own hero, with all his virtues, was to fall before a tyrant. The fact is certain; the motives we must guess.

Addison was, I believe, sufficiently disposed to bar all avenues against all danger. When Pope brought him the prologue, which is properly accommodated to the play, there were these words, "Britons, arise, be worth like this approved;" meaning nothing

[e] The story about Hughes was first told by Oldmixon, in his Art of Criticism, 1728. M.

more than, Britons, erect and exalt yourselves to the approbation of publick virtue. Addison was frighted lest he should be thought a promoter of insurrection, and the line was liquidated to "Britons, attend."

Now "heavily in clouds came on the day, the great, the important day," when Addison was to stand the hazard of the theatre. That there might, however, be left as little hazard as was possible, on the first night Steele, as himself relates, undertook to pack an audience. This, says Pope[f], had been tried, for the first time, in favour of the Distrest Mother; and was now, with more efficacy, practised for Cato.

The danger was soon over. The whole nation was, at that time, on fire with faction. The whigs applauded every line in which liberty was mentioned, as a satire on the tories; and the tories echoed every clap, to show that the satire was unfelt. The story of Bolingbroke is well known. He called Booth to his box, and gave him fifty guineas for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator[g]. The whigs, says Pope, design a second present, when they can accompany it with as good a sentence.

The play, supported thus by the emulation of factious praise, was acted, night after night, for a longer time than, I believe, the publick had allowed to any drama before; and the author, as Mrs. Porter long afterwards related, wandered through the whole

[f] Spence.

[g] Alluding to the duke of Marlborough, at that time suspected of an ambitious aim to obtain the post of general in chief for life. Ed.

exhibition behind the scenes with restless and unappeasable solicitude.

When it was printed, notice was given that the queen would be pleased if it was dedicated to her; "but, as he had designed that compliment elsewhere, he found himself obliged," says Tickell, "by his duty on the one hand, and his honour on the other, to send it into the world without any dedication."

Human happiness has always its abatements; the brightest sunshine of success is not without a cloud. No sooner was Cato offered to the reader, than it was attacked by the acute malignity of Dennis, with all the violence of angry criticism. Dennis, though equally zealous, and probably by his temper more furious, than Addison, for what they called liberty, and though a flatterer of the whig ministry, could not sit quiet at a successful play; but was eager to tell friends and enemies, that they had misplaced their admirations. The world was too stubborn for instruction; with the fate of the censurer of Corneille's Cid, his animadversions showed his anger without effect, and Cato continued to be praised.

Pope had now an opportunity of courting the friendship of Addison, by vilifying his old enemy, and could give resentment its full play, without appearing to revenge himself He, therefore, published a Narrative of the Madness of John Dennis; a performance which left the objections to the play in their full force, and, therefore, discovered more desire of vexing the critick than of defending the poet.

Addison, who was no stranger to the world, probably saw the selfishness of Pope's friendship; and, resolving that he should have the consequences of his officiousness to himself, informed Dennis, by Steele, that he was sorry for the insult; and that, whenever he should think fit to answer his remarks, he would do it in a manner to which nothing could be objected.

The greatest weakness of the play is in the scenes of love, which are said, by Pope[h], to have been added to the original plan upon a subsequent review, in compliance with the popular practice of the stage. Such an authority it is hard to reject; yet the love is so intimately mingled with the whole action, that it cannot easily be thought extrinsick and adventitious; for, if it were taken away, what would be left? or how were the four acts filled in the first draught?

At the publication the wits seemed proud to pay their attendance with encomiastick verses. The best are from an unknown hand, which will, perhaps, lose somewhat of their praise when the author is known to be Jeffreys.

Cato had yet other honours. It was censured as a party-play by a scholar of Oxford; and defended in a favourable examination by Dr. Sewel. It was translated by Salvini into Italian, and acted at Florence; and by the jesuits of St. Omer's into Latin, and played by their pupils. Of this version a copy was sent to Mr. Addison: it is to be wished

[h] Spence.

that it could be found, for the sake of comparing their version of the soliloquy with that of Bland.

A tragedy was written on the same subject by Deschamps, a French poet, which was translated with a criticism on the English play. But the translator and the critick are now forgotten.

Dennis lived on unanswered, and, therefore, little read. Addison knew the policy of literature too well to make his enemy important by drawing the attention of the publick upon a criticism, which, though sometimes intemperate, was often irrefragable.

While Cato was upon the stage, another daily paper, called the Guardian, was published by Steele[1]. To this Addison gave great assistance, whether occasionally, or by previous engagement, is not known.

The character of guardian was too narrow and too serious: it might properly enough admit both the duties and the decencies of life, but seemed not to include literary speculations, and was, in some degree, violated by merriment and burlesque. What had the guardian of the Lizards to do with clubs of tall or of little men, with nests of ants, or with Strada's prolusions?

Of this paper nothing is necessary to be said, but that it found many contributors, and that it was a continuation of the Spectator, with the same elegance, and the same variety, till some unlucky

[1] The Guardian was published in the interval between the Spectator's being laid down and taken up again. The first number was published March 12, 1713; and the last appeared October 1st, 1713. M.

sparkle, from a tory paper, set Steele's politicks on fire, and wit at once blazed into faction. He was soon too hot for neutral topicks, and quitted the Guardian to write the Englishman.

The papers of Addison are marked in the Spectator by one of the letters in the name of Clio, and in the Guardian by a hand; whether it was, as Tickell pretends to think, that he was unwilling to usurp the praise of others, or, as Steele, with far greater likelihood, insinuates, that he could not, without discontent, impart to others any of his own. I have heard that his avidity did not satisfy itself with the air of renown, but that with great eagerness he laid hold on his proportion of the profits.

Many of these papers were written with powers truly comick, with nice discrimination of characters, and accurate observation of natural or accidental deviations from propriety; but it was not supposed that he had tried a comedy on the stage, till Steele, after his death, declared him the author of the Drummer. This, however, Steele did not know to be true by any direct testimony; for, when Addison put the play into his hands, he only told him, it was the work of a "gentleman in the company;" and when it was received, as is confessed, with cold disapprobation, he was probably less willing to claim it. Tickell omitted it in his collection; but the testimony of Steele, and the total silence of any other claimant, has determined the publick to assign it to Addison, and it is now printed with his other poetry. Steele carried the Drummer to the

playhouse, and afterwards to the press, and sold the copy for fifty guineas.

To the opinion of Steele may be added the proof supplied by the play itself, of which the characters are such as Addison would have delineated, and the tendency such as Addison would have promoted. That it should have been ill received would raise wonder, did we not daily see the capricious distribution of theatrical praise.

He was not all this time an indifferent spectator of publick affairs. He wrote, as different exigencies required, in 1707, the present State of the War, and the Necessity of an Augmentation; which, however judicious, being written on temporary topicks, and exhibiting no peculiar powers, laid hold on no attention, and has naturally sunk by its own weight into neglect. This cannot be said of the few papers entitled the Whig Examiner, in which is employed all the force of gay malevolence and humorous satire. Of this paper, which just appeared and expired, Swift remarks, with exultation, that "it is now down among the dead men[j]." He might well rejoice at the death of that which he could not have killed. Every reader of every party, since personal malice is past, and the papers which once inflamed the nation are read only as effusions of wit, must wish for more of the Whig Examiners; for on no occasion was the genius of Addison more vigo-

[j] From a tory song in vogue at the time, the burden whereof is,
And he, that will this health deny,
Down among the dead men let him lie. H.

rously exerted, and on none did the superiority of his powers more evidently appear. His Trial of Count Tariff, written to expose the treaty of commerce with France, lived no longer than the question that produced it.

Not long afterwards, an attempt was made to revive the Spectator, at a time, indeed, by no means favourable to literature, when the succession of a new family to the throne filled the nation with anxiety, discord, and confusion; and either the turbulence of the times, or the satiety of the readers, put a stop to the publication, after an experiment of eighty numbers, which were afterwards collected into an eighth volume, perhaps more valuable than any of those that went before it. Addison produced more than a fourth part[k]; and the other contributors are, by no means, unworthy of appearing as his associates. The time that had passed during the suspension of the Spectator, though it had not lessened his power of humour, seems to have increased his disposition to seriousness: the proportion of his religious, to his comick papers, is greater than in the former series.

The Spectator, from its recommencement, was published only three times a week; and no discriminative marks were added to the papers. To Addison Tickell has ascribed twenty-three.

[k] Addison wrote twenty-three papers out of forty-five, viz. Numbs. 556, 557, 558, 559, 561, 562, 565, 567, 568, 569, 571, 574, 575, 579, 580, 582, 583, 584, 585, 590, 592, 598, 600; so that he produced more than one-half.

The Spectator had many contributors; and Steele, whose negligence kept him always in a hurry, when it was his turn to furnish a paper, called loudly for the letters, of which Addison, whose materials were more, made little use; having recourse to sketches and hints, the product of his former studies, which he now reviewed and completed: among these are named by Tickell, the essays on Wit, those on the Pleasures of the Imagination, and the Criticism on Milton.

When the house of Hanover took possession of the throne, it was reasonable to expect that the zeal of Addison would be suitably rewarded. Before the arrival of king George, he was made secretary to the regency, and was required, by his office, to send notice to Hanover that the queen was dead, and that the throne was vacant. To do this would not have been difficult to any man but Addison, who was so overwhelmed with the greatness of the event, and so distracted by choice of expression, that the lords, who could not wait for the niceties of criticism, called Mr. Southwell, a clerk in the house, and ordered him to despatch the message. Southwell readily told what was necessary in the common style of business, and valued himself upon having done what was too hard for Addison[1].

He was better qualified for the Freeholder, a paper which he published twice a week, from Dec.

When lord Sunderland was appointed lord lieutenant of Ireland, in 1714, Addison was appointed his secretary. Johnson has omitted another step in his promotions. He was, in 1715, made a lord of trade. M.

23, 1715, to the middle of the next year. This was undertaken in defence of the established government, sometimes with argument, and sometimes with mirth. In argument he had many equals; but his humour was singular and matchless. Bigotry itself must be delighted with the Tory Fox-hunter.

There are, however, some strokes less elegant, and less decent; such as the Pretender's Journal, in which one topick of ridicule is his poverty. This mode of abuse had been employed by Milton against king Charles the second.

Jacobæi
Centum, exulantis viscera marsupii regis.

And Oldmixon delights to tell of some alderman of London, that he had more money than the exiled princes; but that which might be expected from Milton's savageness, or Oldmixon's meanness, was not suitable to the delicacy of Addison.

Steele thought the humour of the Freeholder too nice and gentle for such noisy times; and is reported to have said, that the ministry made use of a lute, when they should have called for a trumpet.

This year, 1716[m], he married the countess dowager of Warwick, whom he had solicited by a very long and anxious courtship, perhaps with behaviour not very unlike that of sir Roger to his disdainful widow; and who, I am afraid, diverted herself often by playing with his passion. He is said to have first known her by becoming tutor to her son[n]. "He formed," said Tonson, "the design of getting that lady from

[m] August 2.
[n] Spence.

the time when he was first recommended into the family." In what part of his life he obtained the recommendation, or how long and in what manner he lived in the family, I know not. His advances, at first, were certainly timorous°, but grew bolder as his reputation and influence increased; till, at last, the lady was persuaded to marry him, on terms much like those on which a Turkish princess is espoused, to whom the sultan is reported to pronounce, "Daughter, I give thee this man for thy slave." The marriage, if uncontradicted report can be credited, made no addition to his happiness; it neither found them nor made them equal. She always remembered her own rank, and thought herself entitled to treat with very little ceremony the tutor of her son. Rowe's ballad of the Despairing Shepherd, is said to have been written, either before or after marriage, upon this memorable pair; and it is certain that Addison has left behind him no encouragement for ambitious love.

The year after, 1717, he rose to his highest elevation, being made secretary of state. For this employment he might justly be supposed qualified by long practice of business, and by his regular ascent

° It has been said, that Addison first discovered his addresses to the countess of Warwick would not be unacceptable, from the manner of her receiving such an article in the newspapers, of his own inserting, at which, when he read it to her, he affected to be much astonished. Many anecdotes are on record of Addison's tavern resorts when Holland-house was rendered disagreeable by the haughty caprices of his aristocratic bride. When he had suffered any vexation from her, he would propose to withdraw the club from Button's, who had been a servant in the countess's family. Ed.

through other offices; but expectation is often disappointed; it is universally confessed that he was unequal to the duties of his place. In the house of commons he could not speak, and, therefore, was useless to the defence of the government. In the office, says Pope[p], he could not issue an order without losing his time in quest of fine expressions. What he gained in rank he lost in credit; and, finding by experience his own inability, was forced to solicit his dismission, with a pension of fifteen hundred pounds a year. His friends palliated this relinquishment, of which both friends and enemies knew the true reason, with an account of declining health, and the necessity of recess and quiet.

He now returned to his vocation, and began to plan literary occupations for his future life. He purposed a tragedy on the death of Socrates; a story of which, as Tickell remarks, the basis is narrow, and to which I know not how love could have been appended. There would, however, have been no want either of virtue in the sentiments, or elegance in the language.

He engaged in a nobler work, a defence of the christian religion, of which part was published after his death; and he designed to have made a new poetical version of the psalms.

These pious compositions Pope imputed[q] to a selfish motive, upon the credit, as he owns, of Tonson[r],

[p] Spence.

[q] Spence.

[r] This is inaccurately stated. Pope does not mention the conjecture of Tonson at all. Spence himself has mentioned it from Tonson's own in-

who, having quarrelled with Addison, and not loving him, said, that when he laid down the secretary's office, he intended to take orders, and obtain a bishoprick; "For," said he, "I always thought him a priest in his heart."

That Pope should have thought this conjecture of Tonson worth remembrance, is a proof, but, indeed, so far as I have found, the only proof, that he retained some malignity from their ancient rivalry. Tonson pretended but to guess it; no other mortal ever suspected it; and Pope might have reflected, that a man, who had been secretary of state in the ministry of Sunderland, knew a nearer way to a bishoprick than by defending religion, or translating the psalms.

It is related, that he had once a design to make an English dictionary, and that he considered Dr. Tillotson as the writer of highest authority. There was formerly sent to me by Mr. Locker, clerk of the leatherşellers' company, who was eminent for curiosity and literature, a collection of examples selected from Tillotson's works, as Locker said, by Addison. It came too late to be of use, so I inspected it but slightly, and remember it indistinctly. I thought the passages too short.

Addison, however, did not conclude his life in peaceful studies; but relapsed, when he was near his end, to a political dispute.

formation; for he has subscribed the name of Tonson to the paragraph in question, according to his constant practice of stating the name of his informer. M.

It so happened that, 1718–19, a controversy was agitated, with great vehemence, between those friends of long continuance, Addison and Steele. It may be asked, in the language of Homer, what power or what cause could set them at variance. The subject of their dispute was of great importance. The earl of Sunderland proposed an act, called the Peerage Bill; by which the number of peers should be fixed, and the king restrained from any new creation of nobility, unless when an old family should be extinct. To this the lords would naturally agree; and the king, who was yet little acquainted with his own prerogative, and, as is now well known, almost indifferent to the possessions of the crown, had been persuaded to consent. The only difficulty was found among the commons, who were not likely to approve the perpetual exclusion of themselves and their posterity. The bill, therefore, was eagerly opposed, and, among others, by sir Robert Walpole, whose speech was published.

The lords might think their dignity diminished by improper advancements, and particularly by the introduction of twelve new peers at once, to produce a majority of tories in the last reign; an act of authority violent enough, yet certainly legal, and by no means to be compared with that contempt of national right with which, some time afterwards, by the instigation of whiggism, the commons, chosen by the people for three years, chose themselves for seven. But, whatever might be the disposition of the lords, the people had no wish to increase their power.

The tendency of the bill, as Steele observed in a letter to the earl of Oxford, was to introduce an aristocracy; for a majority in the house of lords, so limited, would have been despotick and irresistible.

To prevent this subversion of the ancient establishment, Steele, whose pen readily seconded his political passions, endeavoured to alarm the nation by a pamphlet called the Plebeian. To this an answer was published by Addison, under the title of the Old Whig, in which it is not discovered that Steele was then known to be the advocate for the commons. Steele replied by a second Plebeian; and, whether by ignorance or by courtesy, confined himself to his question, without any personal notice of his opponent. Nothing, hitherto, was committed against the laws of friendship, or proprieties of decency; but controvertists cannot long retain their kindness for each other. The Old Whig answered the Plebeian, and could not forbear some contempt of "little Dicky, whose trade it was to write pamphlets." Dicky, however, did not lose his settled veneration for his friend; but contented himself with quoting some lines of Cato, which were at once detection and reproof. The bill was laid aside during that session; and Addison died before the next, in which its commitment was rejected by two hundred and sixty-five to one hundred and seventy-seven.

Every reader surely must regret that these two illustrious friends, after so many years passed in confidence and endearment, in unity of interest, conformity of opinion, and fellowship of study, should

finally part in acrimonious opposition. Such a controversy was "Bellum plusquam *civile*," as Lucan expresses it. Why could not faction find other advocates? But, among the uncertainties of the human state, we are doomed to number the instability of friendship.

Of this dispute I have little knowledge but from the Biographica Britannica. The Old Whig is not inserted in Addison's works; nor is it mentioned by Tickell in his life; why it was omitted, the biographers, doubtless, give the true reason; the fact was too recent, and those who had been heated in the contention were not yet cool.

The necessity of complying with times, and of sparing persons, is the great impediment of biography. History may be formed from permanent monuments and records; but lives can only be written from personal knowledge, which is growing every day less, and in a short time is lost for ever. What is known can seldom be immediately told; and when it might be told, it is no longer known. The delicate features of the mind, the nice discriminations of character, and the minute peculiarities of conduct, are soon obliterated; and it is surely better that caprice, obstinacy, frolick, and folly, however they might delight in the description, should be silently forgotten, than that, by wanton merriment and unseasonable detection, a pang should be given to a widow, a daughter, a brother, or a friend. As the process of these narratives is now bringing me among my contemporaries, I begin to feel myself "walk-

ing upon ashes under which the fire is not extinguished," and coming to the time of which it will be proper rather to say "nothing that is false, than all that is true."

The end of this useful life was now approaching. Addison had, for some time, been oppressed by shortness of breath, which was now aggravated by a dropsy; and, finding his danger pressing, he prepared to die conformably to his own precepts and professions.

During this lingering decay, he sent, as Pope relates[s], a message by the earl of Warwick to Mr. Gay, desiring to see him. Gay, who had not visited him for some time before, obeyed the summons, and found himself received with great kindness. The purpose for which the interview had been solicited was then discovered. Addison told him, that he had injured him; but that, if he recovered, he would recompense him. What the injury was, he did not explain, nor did Gay ever know, but supposed that some preferment designed for him had, by Addison's intervention, been withheld.

Lord Warwick was a young man of very irregular life, and, perhaps, of loose opinions[t]. Addison, for

[s] Spence.

[t] This account of Addison's death is from Dr. Young, who calls lord Warwick a youth finely accomplished; and does not give the least ground for the representation in the text, that he was of irregular life, and that this was a last effort of Addison's to reclaim him. M.— Dr. Young was far too much of a courtier to see the vices of a peer, but even his guarded statement does give ground for Dr. Johnson's conclusion. His words are, "finely accomplished, but not above being the better for good impressions from a dying friend." Ed.

whom he did not want respect, had very diligently endeavoured to reclaim him; but his arguments and expostulations had no effect. One experiment, however, remained to be tried: when he found his life near its end, he directed the young lord to be called; and when he desired, with great tenderness, to hear his last injunctions, told him: "I have sent for you, that you may see how a christian can die." What effect this awful scene had on the earl, I know not: he, likewise, died himself in a short time.

In Tickell's excellent elegy on his friend are these lines:

> He taught us how to live; and, oh! too high
> The price of knowledge, taught us how to die.

In which he alludes, as he told Dr. Young, to this moving interview.

Having given directions to Mr. Tickell for the publication of his works, and dedicated them on his deathbed to his friend Mr. Craggs, he died June 17, 1719, at Holland-house, leaving no child but a daughter[u].

Of his virtue it is a sufficient testimony, that the resentment of party has transmitted no charge of any crime. He was not one of those who are praised only after death; for his merit was so generally acknowledged, that Swift, having observed that his election passed without a contest, adds, that, if he had proposed himself for king, he would hardly have been refused.

[u]Who died at Bilton, in Warwickshire, at a very advanced age, in 1797. See Gent. Mag. vol. lxvii. p. 256, 385. N.

His zeal for his party did not extinguish his kindness for the merit of his opponents: when he was secretary in Ireland, he refused to intermit his acquaintance with Swift.

Of his habits, or external manners, nothing is so often mentioned as that timorous or sullen taciturnity, which his friends called modesty, by too mild a name. Steele mentions, with great tenderness, "that remarkable bashfulness, which is a cloak that hides and muffles merit;" and tells us, "that his abilities were covered only by modesty, which doubles the beauties which are seen, and gives credit and esteem to all that are concealed." Chesterfield affirms, that "Addison was the most timorous and awkward man that he ever saw." And Addison, speaking of his own deficiency in conversation, used to say of himself, that, with respect to intellectual wealth, "he could draw bills for a thousand pounds, though he had not a guinea in his pocket."

That he wanted current coin for ready payment, and, by that want, was often obstructed and distressed; that he was oppressed by an improper and ungraceful timidity; every testimony concurs to prove; but Chesterfield's representation is, doubtless, hyperbolical. That man cannot be supposed very unexpert in the arts of conversation and practice of life, who, without fortune or alliance, by his usefulness and dexterity, became secretary of state; and who died at forty-seven, after having not only stood long in the highest rank of wit and literature, but filled one of the most important offices of state.

The time in which he lived had reason to lament his obstinacy of silence; "for he was," says Steele, "above all men in that talent called humour, and enjoyed it in such perfection, that I have often reflected, after a night spent with him apart from all the world, that I had had the pleasure of conversing with an intimate acquaintance of Terence and Catullus, who had all their wit and nature, heightened with humour more exquisite and delightful than any other man ever possessed." This is the fondness of a friend; let us hear what is told us by a rival: "Addison's conversation[v]," says Pope, "had something in it more charming than I have found in any other man. But this was only when familiar; before strangers, or, perhaps, a single stranger, he preserved his dignity by a stiff silence."

This modesty was by no means inconsistent with a very high opinion of his own merit. He demanded to be the first name in modern wit; and, with Steele to echo him, used to depreciate Dryden, whom Pope and Congreve defended against them[w]. There is no reason to doubt, that he suffered too much pain from the prevalence of Pope's poetical reputation; nor is it without strong reason suspected, that by some disingenuous acts he endeavoured to obstruct it; Pope was not the only man whom he insidiously injured, though the only man of whom he could be afraid.

His own powers were such as might have satisfied him with conscious excellence. Of very exten-

[v] Spence. [w] Tonson and Spence.

sive learning he has, indeed, given no proofs. He seems to have had small acquaintance with the sciences, and to have read little except Latin and French; but, of the Latin poets, his Dialogues on Medals show that he had perused the works with great diligence and skill. The abundance of his own mind left him little need of adventitious sentiments; his wit always could suggest what the occasion demanded. He had read, with critical eyes, the important volume of human life, and knew the heart of man from the depths of stratagem to the surface of affectation.

What he knew he could easily communicate. "This," says Steele, "was particular in this writer, that, when he had taken his resolution, or made his plan for what he designed to write, he would walk about a room, and dictate it into language, with as much freedom and ease as any one could write it down, and attend to the coherence and grammar of what he dictated."

Pope[x], who can be less suspected of favouring his memory, declares that he wrote very fluently, but was slow and scrupulous in correcting; that many of his Spectators were written very fast, and sent immediately to the press; and that it seemed to be for his advantage not to have time for much revisal.

"He would alter," says Pope, "any thing to please his friends, before publication; but would not retouch his pieces afterwards: and, I believe, not

[x] Spence.

one word in Cato, to which I made an objection, was suffered to stand."

The last line of Cato is Pope's, having been originally written,

And, oh! 'twas this that ended Cato's life.

Pope might have made more objections to the six concluding lines. In the first couplet the words, "from hence," are improper; and the second line is taken from Dryden's Virgil. Of the next couplet, the first verse being included in the second, is, therefore, useless; and in the third, discord is made to produce strife.

Of the course of Addison's familiar day[y], before his marriage, Pope has given a detail. He had in the house with him Budgell, and, perhaps, Philips. His chief companions were Steele, Budgell, Philips, Carey, Davenant, and colonel Brett. With one or other of these he always breakfasted. He studied all morning; then dined at a tavern; and went afterwards to Button's.

Button had been a servant in the countess of Warwick's family; who, under the patronage of Addison, kept a coffee-house on the south side of Russel street, about two doors from Covent garden. Here it was that the wits of that time used to assemble. It is said, that when Addison had suffered any vexation from the countess, he withdrew the company from Button's house.

From the coffee-house he went again to a tavern,

[y] Spence.

where he often sat late, and drank too much wine. In the bottle, discontent seeks for comfort, cowardice for courage, and bashfulness for confidence. It is not unlikely that Addison was first seduced to excess by the manumission which he obtained from the servile timidity of his sober hours. He that feels oppression from the presence of those to whom he knows himself superiour, will desire to set loose his powers of conversation; and who, that ever asked succours from Bacchus, was able to preserve himself from being enslaved by his auxiliary?

Among those friends it was that Addison displayed the elegance of his colloquial accomplishments, which may easily be supposed such as Pope represents them. The remark of Mandeville, who, when he had passed an evening in his company, declared that he was a parson in a tie-wig, can detract little from his character; he was always reserved to strangers, and was not incited to uncommon freedom by a character like that of Mandeville.

From any minute knowledge of his familiar manners, the intervention of sixty years has now debarred us. Steele once promised Congreve and the publick a complete description of his character; but the promises of authors are like the vows of lovers. Steele thought no more on his design, or thought on it with anxiety that at last disgusted him, and left his friend in the hands of Tickell.

One slight lineament of his character Swift has preserved. It was his practice, when he found any man invincibly wrong, to flatter his opinions by ac-

quiescence, and sink him yet deeper in absurdity. This artifice of mischief was admired by Stella; and Swift seems to approve her admiration.

His works will supply some information. It appears, from his various pictures of the world, that, with all his bashfulness, he had conversed with many distinct classes of men, had surveyed their ways with very diligent observation, and marked, with great acuteness, the effects of different modes of life. He was a man in whose presence nothing reprehensible was out of danger; quick in discerning whatever was wrong or ridiculous, and not unwilling to expose it. "There are," says Steele, "in his writings many oblique strokes upon some of the wittiest men of the age." His delight was more to excite merriment than detestation; and he detects follies rather than crimes.

If any judgment be made, from his books, of his moral character, nothing will be found but purity and excellence. Knowledge of mankind, indeed, less extensive than that of Addison, will show, that to write, and to live, are very different. Many who praise virtue, do no more than praise it. Yet it is reasonable to believe that Addison's professions and practice were at no great variance, since, amidst that storm of faction in which most of his life was passed, though his station made him conspicuous, and his activity made him formidable, the character given him by his friends was never contradicted by his enemies: of those, with whom interest or opinion united him, he had not only the esteem, but the

kindness; and of others, whom the violence of opposition drove against him, though he might lose the love, he retained the reverence.

It is justly observed by Tickell, that he employed wit on the side of virtue and religion. He not only made the proper use of wit himself, but taught it to others; and from his time it has been generally subservient to the cause of reason and of truth. He has dissipated the prejudice that had long connected gaiety with vice, and easiness of manners with laxity of principles. He has restored virtue to its dignity, and taught innocence not to be ashamed. This is an elevation of literary character, "above all Greek, above all Roman fame." No greater felicity can genius attain, than that of having purified intellectual pleasure, separated mirth from indecency, and wit from licentiousness: of having taught a succession of writers to bring elegance and gaiety to the aid of goodness; and, if I may use expressions yet more awful, of having "turned many to righteousness."

Addison, in his life, and for some time afterwards, was considered, by the greater part of readers, as supremely excelling both in poetry and criticism. Part of his reputation may be probably ascribed to the advancement of his fortune: when, as Swift observes, he became a statesman, and saw poets waiting at his levee, it is no wonder that praise was accumulated upon him. Much, likewise, may be more honourably ascribed to his personal character: he who, if he had claimed it, might have ob-

tained the diadem, was not likely to be denied the laurel.

But time quickly puts a end to artificial and accidental fame; and Addison is to pass through futurity protected only by his genius. Every name, which kindness or interest once raised too high, is in danger, lest the next age should, by the vengeance of criticism, sink it in the same proportion. A great writer has lately styled him "an indifferent poet, and a worse critick."

His poetry is first to be considered; of which it must be confessed, that it has not often those felicities of diction which give lustre to sentiments, or that vigour of sentiment that animates diction; there is little of ardour, vehemence, or transport; there is very rarely the awfulness of grandeur, and not very often the splendour of elegance. He thinks justly; but he thinks faintly. This is his general character; to which, doubtless, many single passages will furnish exceptions.

Yet, if he seldom reaches supreme excellence, he rarely sinks into dulness, and is still more rarely entangled in absurdity. He did not trust his powers enough to be negligent. There is, in most of his compositions, a calmness and equability, deliberate and cautious, sometimes with little that delights, but seldom with any thing that offends.

Of this kind seem to be his poems to Dryden, to Somers, and to the king. His ode on St. Cecilia has been imitated by Pope, and has something in it of Dryden's vigour. Of his account of the English

poets, he used to speak as a "poor thing[z];" but it is not worse than his usual strain. He has said, not very judiciously, in his character of Waller,

> Thy verse could show ev'n Cromwell's innocence,
> And compliment the storms that bore him hence.
> O! had thy muse not come an age too soon,
> But seen great Nassau on the British throne,
> How had his triumph glitter'd in thy page!

What is this but to say, that he who could compliment Cromwell had been the proper poet for king William; Addison, however, never printed the piece.

The letter from Italy has been always praised, but has never been praised beyond its merit. It is more correct, with less appearance of labour, and more elegant, with less ambition of ornament, than any other of his poems. There is, however, one broken metaphor, of which notice may properly be taken:

> Fir'd with that name—
> I bridle in my struggling muse with pain,
> That longs to launch into a nobler strain.

To *bridle a goddess* is no very delicate idea; but why must she be *bridled?* because she *longs to launch;* an act which was never hindered by a *bridle:* and whither will she *launch?* into a *nobler strain.* She is in the first line a *horse*, in the second a *boat;* and the care of the poet is to keep his *horse* or his *boat* from *singing.*

The next composition is the far-famed Campaign, which Dr. Warton has termed a "Gazette in rhyme,"

[z] Spence.

with harshness not often used by the good-nature of his criticism. Before a censure so severe is admitted, let us consider that war is a frequent subject of poetry, and then inquire who has described it with more justness and force. Many of our own writers tried their powers upon this year of victory; yet Addison's is confessedly the best performance: his poem is the work of a man not blinded by the dust of learning; his images are not borrowed merely from books. The superiority which he confers upon his hero is not personal prowess, and "mighty bone," but deliberate intrepidity, a calm command of his passions, and the power of consulting his own mind in the midst of danger. The rejection and contempt of fiction is rational and manly.

It may be observed that the last line is imitated by Pope:

> Marlb'rough's exploits appear divinely bright—
> Rais'd of themselves, their genuine charms they boast,
> And those that paint them truest, praise them most.

This Pope had in his thoughts: but, not knowing how to use what was not his own, he spoiled the thought when he had borrowed it:

> The well-sung woes shall sooth my pensive ghost;
> He best can paint[a] them who shall feel them most.

Martial exploits may be *painted;* perhaps *woes* may be *painted;* but they are surely not *painted* by being *well-sung:* it is not easy to paint in song, or to sing in colours.

No passage in the Campaign has been more often

[a] "Paint means," says Dr. Warton, "express, or describe them."

mentioned than the simile of the angel, which is said, in the Tatler, to be "one of the noblest thoughts that ever entered into the heart of man," and is, therefore, worthy of attentive consideration. Let it be first inquired whether it be a simile. A poetical simile is the discovery of likeness between two actions, in their general nature dissimilar, or of causes terminating by different operations in some resemblance of effect. But the mention of another like consequence from a like cause, or of a like performance by a like agency, is not a simile, but an exemplification. It is not a simile to say that the Thames waters fields, as the Po waters fields; or that as Hecla vomits flames in Iceland, so Ætna vomits flames in Sicily. When Horace says of Pindar, that he pours his violence and rapidity of verse, as a river swoln with rain rushes from the mountain; or of himself, that his genius wanders in quest of poetical decorations, as the bee wanders to collect honey; he, in either case, produces a simile; the mind is impressed with the resemblance of things generally unlike, as unlike as intellect and body. But if Pindar had been described as writing with the copiousness and grandeur of Homer; or Horace had told that he reviewed and finished his own poetry with the same care as Isocrates polished his orations, instead of similitude he would have exhibited almost identity; he would have given the same portraits with different names. In the poem now examined, when the English are represented as gaining a fortified pass, by repetition of attack and per-

severance of resolution; their obstinacy of courage, and vigour of onset, is well illustrated by the sea that breaks, with incessant battery, the dikes of Holland. This is a simile; but when Addison, having celebrated the beauty of Marlborough's person, tells us, that "Achilles thus was form'd with ev'ry grace," here is no simile, but a mere exemplification. A simile may be compared to lines converging at a point, and is more excellent as the lines approach from greater distance; an exemplification may be considered as two parallel lines, which run on together without approximation, never far separated, and never joined.

Marlborough is so like the angel in the poem, that the action of both is almost the same, and performed by both in the same manner. Marlborough "teaches the battle to rage;" the angel "directs the storm:" Marlborough is "unmoved in peaceful thought;" the angel is "calm and serene:" Marlborough stands "unmoved amidst the shock of hosts;" the angel rides "calm in the whirlwind." The lines on Marlborough are just and noble; but the simile gives almost the same images a second time.

But, perhaps, this thought, though hardly a simile, was remote from vulgar conceptions, and required great labour of research, or dexterity of application. Of this, Dr. Madden, a name which Ireland ought to honour, once gave me his opinion. "If I had set," said he, "ten schoolboys to write on the battle of Blenheim, and eight had brought me the angel, I should not have been surprised."

The opera of Rosamond, though it is seldom mentioned, is one of the first of Addison's compositions. The subject is well chosen, the fiction is pleasing, and the praise of Marlborough, for which the scene gives an opportunity, is, what perhaps every human excellence must be, the product of good luck, improved by genius. The thoughts are sometimes great, and sometimes tender; the versification is easy and gay. There is, doubtless, some advantage in the shortness of the lines, which there is little temptation to load with expletive epithets. The dialogue seems commonly better than the songs. The two comick characters of sir Trusty and Grideline, though of no great value, are yet such as the poet intended[b]. Sir Trusty's account of the death of Rosamond is, I think, too grossly absurd. The whole drama is airy and elegant; engaging in its process, and pleasing in its conclusion. If Addison had cultivated the lighter parts of poetry, he would, probably, have excelled.

The tragedy of Cato, which, contrary to the rule observed in selecting the works of other poets, has, by the weight of its character, forced its way into the late collection, is unquestionably the noblest production of Addison's genius. Of a work so much read, it is difficult to say any thing new. About things on which the publick thinks long, it commonly attains to think right; and of Cato it has been not unjustly determined, that it is rather a poem in dialogue than a drama, rather a succession

[b] But, according to Dr. Warton, "ought not to have intended."

of just sentiments in elegant language, than a representation of natural affections, or of any state probable or possible in human life. Nothing here "excites or assuages emotion:" here is "no magical power of raising phantastick terrour or wild anxiety." The events are expected without solicitude, and are remembered without joy or sorrow. Of the agents we have no care: we consider not what they are doing, or what they are suffering; we wish only to know what they have to say. Cato is a being above our solicitude; a man of whom the gods take care, and whom we leave to their care with heedless confidence. To the rest, neither gods nor men can have much attention; for there is not one amongst them that strongly attracts either affection or esteem. But they are made the vehicles of such sentiments and such expression, that there is scarcely a scene in the play which the reader does not wish to impress upon his memory.

When Cato was shown to Pope[c], he advised the author to print it, without any theatrical exhibition; supposing that it would be read more favourably than heard. Addison declared himself of the same opinion; but urged the importunity of his friends for its appearance on the stage. The emulation of parties made it successful beyond expectation; and its success has introduced or confirmed among us the use of dialogue too declamatory, of unaffecting elegance, and chill philosophy.

The universality of applause, however it might

[c] Spence.

quell the censure of common mortals, had no other effect than to harden Dennis in fixed dislike; but his dislike was not merely capricious. He found and showed many faults: he showed them, indeed, with anger, but he found them with acuteness, such as ought to rescue his criticism from oblivion; though, at last, it will have no other life than it derives from the work which it endeavours to oppress.

Why he pays no regard to the opinion of the audience, he gives his reason, by remarking, that,

"A deference is to be paid to a general applause, when it appears that that applause is natural and spontaneous; but that little regard is to be had to it, when it is affected and artificial. Of all the tragedies which, in his memory, have had vast and violent runs, not one has been excellent; few have been tolerable; most have been scandalous. When a poet writes a tragedy, who knows he has judgment, and who feels he has genius, that poet presumes upon his own merit, and scorns to make a cabal. That people come coolly to the representation of such a tragedy, without any violent expectation, or delusive imagination, or invincible prepossession; that such an audience is liable to receive the impressions which the poem shall naturally make on them, and to judge by their own reason, and their own judgments, and that reason and judgment are calm and serene, not formed by nature to make proselytes, and to control and lord it over the imaginations of others. But that when an author writes a tragedy, who knows he has neither genius nor judgment, he

has recourse to the making a party, and he endeavours to make up in industry what is wanting in talent, and to supply by poetical craft the absence of poetical art; that such an author is humbly contented to raise men's passions by a plot without doors, since he despairs of doing it by that which he brings upon the stage. That party and passion, and prepossession, are clamorous and tumultuous things, and so much the more clamorous and tumultuous by how much the more erroneous: that they domineer and tyrannise over the imaginations of persons who want judgment, and sometimes too of those who have it; and, like a fierce and outrageous torrent, bear down all opposition before them."

He then condemns the neglect of poetical justice; which is always one of his favourite principles.

"'Tis certainly the duty of every tragick poet, by the exact distribution of poetical justice, to imitate the divine dispensation, and to inculcate a particular providence. 'Tis true, indeed, upon the stage of the world, the wicked sometimes prosper, and the guiltless suffer. But that is permitted by the governor of the world, to show, from the attribute of his infinite justice, that there is a compensation in futurity, to prove the immortality of the human soul, and the certainty of future rewards and punishments. But the poetical persons in tragedy exist no longer than the reading, or the representation; the whole extent of their entity is circumscribed by those; and, therefore, during that reading or representation, according to their merits or demerits, they must be pun-

ished or rewarded. If this is not done, there is no impartial distribution of poetical justice, no instructive lecture of a particular providence, and no imitation of the divine dispensation. And yet the author of this tragedy does not only run counter to this, in the fate of his principal character; but every where, throughout it, makes virtue suffer, and vice triumph: for not only Cato is vanquished by Cæsar, but the treachery and perfidiousness of Syphax prevail over the honest simplicity and the credulity of Juba; and the sly subtlety and dissimulation of Portius over the generous frankness and open-heartedness of Marcus."

Whatever pleasure there may be in seeing crimes punished and virtue rewarded, yet, since wickedness often prospers in real life, the poet is certainly at liberty to give it prosperity on the stage. For if poetry has an imitation of reality, how are its laws broken by exhibiting the world in its true form? The stage may sometimes gratify our wishes; but, if it be truly the "mirror of life," it ought to show us sometimes what we are to expect.

Dennis objects to the characters, that they are not natural, or reasonable; but as heroes and heroines are not beings that are seen every day, it is hard to find upon what principles their conduct shall be tried. It is, however, not useless to consider what he says of the manner in which Cato receives the account of his son's death.

"Nor is the grief of Cato, in the fourth act, one jot more in nature than that of his son and Lucia

in the third. Cato receives the news of his son's death not only with dry eyes, but with a sort of satisfaction; and, in the same page, sheds tears for the calamity of his country, and does the same thing in the next page upon the bare apprehension of the danger of his friends. Now, since the love of one's country is the love of one's countrymen, as I have shown upon another occasion, I desire to ask these questions: Of all our countrymen, which do we love most, those whom we know, or those whom we know not? And of those whom we know, which do we cherish most, our friends or our enemies? And of our friends, which are the dearest to us, those who are related to us, or those who are not? And of all our relations, for which have we most tenderness, for those who are near to us, or for those who are remote? And of our near relations, which are the nearest, and, consequently, the dearest to us, our offspring, or others? Our offspring most certainly; as nature, or, in other words, providence, has wisely contrived for the preservation of mankind. Now, does it not follow, from what has been said, that for a man to receive the news of his son's death with dry eyes, and to weep at the same time for the calamities of his country, is a wretched affectation, and a miserable inconsistency? Is not that, in plain English, to receive with dry eyes the news of the deaths of those for whose sake our country is a name so dear to us, and, at the same time, to shed tears for those for whose sake our country is not a name so dear to us?"

But this formidable assailant is least resistible when he attacks the probability of the action, and the reasonableness of the plan. Every critical reader must remark, that Addison has, with a scrupulosity almost unexampled on the English stage, confined himself in time to a single day, and in place to rigorous unity. The scene never changes, and the whole action of the play passes in the great hall of Cato's house at Utica. Much, therefore, is done in the hall, for which any other place had been more fit; and this impropriety affords Dennis many hints of merriment, and opportunities of triumph. The passage is long; but as such disquisitions are not common, and the objections are skilfully formed and vigorously urged, those who delight in critical controversy will not think it tedious.

"Upon the departure of Portius, Sempronius makes but one soliloquy, and immediately in comes Syphax, and then the two politicians are at it immediately. They lay their heads together, with their snuff-boxes in their hands, as Mr. Bayes has it, and league it away. But in the midst of that wise scene, Syphax seems to give a seasonable caution to Sempronius:

> '*Syph.* But is it true, Sempronius, that your senate
> Is call'd together? Gods! thou must be cautious;
> Cato has piercing eyes.'

"There is a great deal of caution shown indeed, in meeting in a governor's own hall to carry on their plot against him. Whatever opinion they have of his eyes, I suppose they had none of his ears,

or they would never have talked at this foolish rate so near:

'Gods! thou must be cautious.'

Oh! yes, very cautious, for if Cato should overhear you, and turn you off for politicians, Cæsar would never take you; no, Cæsar would never take you.

"When Cato, act the second, turns the senators out of the hall, upon pretence of acquainting Juba with the result of their debates, he appears to me to do a thing which is neither reasonable nor civil. Juba might certainly have better been made acquainted with the result of that debate in some private apartment of the palace. But the poet was driven upon this absurdity to make way for another; and that is, to give Juba an opportunity to demand Marcia of her father. But the quarrel and rage of Juba and Syphax, in the same act; the invectives of Syphax against the Romans and Cato; the advice that he gives Juba, in her father's hall, to bear away Marcia by force; and his brutal and clamorous rage upon his refusal, and at a time when Cato was scarcely out of sight, and, perhaps, not out of hearing, at least some of his guards or domesticks must necessarily be supposed to be within hearing; is a thing that is so far from being probable, that it is hardly possible.

"Sempronius, in the second act, comes back once more in the same morning to the governor's hall, to carry on the conspiracy with Syphax against the governor, his country, and his family; which is so stupid, that it is below the wisdom of

the O—'s, the Mac's, and the Teague's; even Eustace Cummins himself would never have gone to Justice-hall to have conspired against the government. If officers at Portsmouth should lay their heads together, in order to the carrying off[d] J— G—'s niece or daughter, would they meet in J— G—'s hall, to carry on that conspiracy ? There would be no necessity for their meeting there, at least till they came to the execution of their plot, because there would be other places to meet in. There would be no probability that they should meet there, because there would be places more private and more commodious. Now there ought to be nothing in a tragical action but what is necessary or probable.

"But treason is not the only thing that is carried on in this hall; that, and love, and philosophy, take their turns in it, without any manner of necessity or probability occasioned by the action, as duly and as regularly, without interrupting one another, as if there were a triple league between them, and a mutual agreement that each should give place to, and make way for the other, in a due and orderly succession.

"We now come to the third act. Sempronius, in this act, comes into the governor's hall, with the leaders of the mutiny; but, as soon as Cato is gone, Sempronius, who but just before had acted like an

[d] The person meant by the initials, J. G. is sir John Gibson, lieutenant-governor of Portsmouth in the year 1710, and afterwards. He was much beloved in the army, and by the common soldiers called Johnny Gibson. H.

unparalleled knave, discovers himself, like an egregious fool, to be an accomplice in the conspiracy.

> '*Semp.* Know, villains, when such paltry slaves presume
> To mix in treason, if the plot succeeds,
> They're thrown neglected by; but, if it fails,
> They're sure to die like dogs, as you shall do.
> Here, take these factious monsters, drag them forth
> To sudden death.'—

"'Tis true, indeed, the second leader says, there are none there but friends; but is that possible at such a juncture? Can a parcel of rogues attempt to assassinate the governor of a town of war, in his own house, in mid-day, and, after they are discovered, and defeated, can there be none near them but friends? Is it not plain, from these words of Sempronius,

> 'Here, take these factious monsters, drag them forth
> To sudden death'—

and from the entrance of the guards upon the word of command, that those guards were within earshot? Behold Sempronius, then, palpably discovered. How comes it to pass, then, that instead of being hanged up with the rest, he remains secure in the governor's hall, and there carries on his conspiracy against the government, the third time in the same day, with his old comrade Syphax, who enters at the same time that the guards are carrying away the leaders, big with the news of the defeat of Sempronius; though where he had his intelligence so soon is difficult to imagine? And now the reader may expect a very extraordinary scene: there is not abundance of spirit indeed, nor a great deal

of passion, but there is wisdom more than enough to supply all defects.

'*Syph.* Our first design, my friend, has prov'd abortive;
Still there remains an after-game to play:
My troops are mounted, their Numidian steeds
Snuff up the winds, and long to scour the desert.
Let but Sempronius lead us in our flight,
We'll force the gate, where Marcus keeps his guard,
And hew down all that would oppose our passage;
A day will bring us into Cæsar's camp.

'*Semp.* Confusion! I have fail'd of half my purpose;
Marcia, the charming Marcia's left behind.'

Well! but though he tells us the half-purpose that he has failed of, he does not tell us the half that he has carried. But what does he mean by,

'Marcia, the charming Marcia's left behind?'

He is now in her own house; and we have neither seen her, nor heard of her, any where else since the play began. But now let us hear Syphax:

'What hinders then, but that thou find her out,
And hurry her away by manly force?'

But what does old Syphax mean by finding her out? They talk as if she were as hard to be found as a hare in a frosty morning.

'*Semp.* But how to gain admission?'

Oh! she is found out then, it seems—

'But how to gain admission! for access
Is giv'n to none, but Juba and her brothers.'

But, raillery apart, why access to Juba? For he was owned and received as a lover neither by the father nor by the daughter. Well! but let that pass. Syphax

puts Sempronius out of pain immediately; and, being a Numidian, abounding in wiles, supplies him with a stratagem for admission, that, I believe, is a non-pareille.

'*Syph.* Thou shalt have Juba's dress, and Juba's guards ;
The doors will open when Numidia's prince
Seems to appear before them.'

"Sempronius is, it seems, to pass for Juba in full day at Cato's house, where they were both so very well known, by having Juba's dress and his guards: as if one of the marshals of France could pass for the duke of Bavaria, at noonday, at Versailles, by having his dress and liveries. But how does Syphax pretend to help Sempronius to young Juba's dress? Does he serve him in a double capacity, as general and master of his wardrobe? But why Juba's guards? For the devil of any guards has Juba appeared with yet. Well! though this is a mighty politick invention, yet, methinks, they might have done without it: for, since the advice that Syphax gave to Sempronius was,

'To hurry her away by manly force,'

in my opinion, the shortest and likeliest way of coming at the lady was by demolishing, instead of putting on an impertinent disguise to circumvent two or three slaves. But Sempronius, it seems, is of another opinion. He extols to the skies the invention of old Syphax:

'*Semp.* Heav'ns! what a thought was there!'

"Now I appeal to the reader, if I have not been

as good as my word. Did I not tell him, that I would lay before him a very wise scene?

"But now let us lay before the reader that part of the scenery of the fourth act, which may show the absurdities which the author has run into, through the indiscreet observance of the unity of place. I do not remember that Aristotle has said any thing expressly concerning the unity of place. 'Tis true, implicitly he has said enough in the rules which he has laid down for the chorus. For, by making the chorus an essential part of tragedy, and by bringing it on the stage immediately after the opening of the scene, and retaining it there till the very catastrophe, he has so determined and fixed the place of action, that it was impossible for an author on the Grecian stage to break through that unity. I am of opinion, that if a modern tragick poet can preserve the unity of place, without destroying the probability of the incidents, 'tis always best for him to do it; because, by the preservation of that unity, as we have taken notice above, he adds grace, and clearness, and comeliness, to the representation. But since there are no express rules about it, and we are under no compulsion to keep it, since we have no chorus, as the Grecian poet had; if it cannot be preserved, without rendering the greater part of the incidents unreasonable and absurd, and, perhaps, sometimes monstrous, 'tis certainly better to break it.

"Now comes bully Sempronius, comically accoutred and equipped with his Numidian dress and

his Numidian guards. Let the reader attend to him with all his ears; for the words of the wise are precious:

'*Semp.* The deer is lodg'd, I've track'd her to her covert.'

"Now I would fain know why this deer is said to be lodged, since we have not heard one word, since the play began, of her being at all out of harbour; and if we consider the discourse with which she and Lucia begin the act, we have reason to believe that they had hardly been talking of such matters in the street. However, to pleasure Sempronius, let us suppose, for once, that the deer is lodged:

'The deer is lodg'd, I've track'd her to her covert.'

"If he had seen her in the open field, what occasion had he to track her, when he had so many Numidian dogs at his heels, which, with one halloo, he might have set upon her haunches? If he did not see her in the open field, how could he possibly track her? If he had seen her in the street, why did he not set upon her in the street, since through the street she must be carried at last? Now here, instead of having his thoughts upon his business, and upon the present danger; instead of meditating and contriving how he shall pass with his mistress through the southern gate, where her brother Marcus is upon the guard, and where she would certainly prove an impediment to him, which is the Roman word for the *baggage;* instead of doing this, Sempronius is entertaining himself with whimseys:

'*Semp.* How will the young Numidian rave to see
His mistress lost! If aught could glad my soul,

Beyond th' enjoyment of so bright a prize,
'Twould be to torture that young gay barbarian.
But hark! what noise? Death to my hopes! 'tis he,
'Tis Juba's self! There is but one way left!
He must be murder'd, and a passage cut
Through those his guards.'

"Pray, what are 'those his guards?' I thought, at present, that Juba's guards had been Sempronius's tools, and had been dangling after his heels.

"But now let us sum up all these absurdities together. Sempronius goes at noonday, in Juba's clothes, and with Juba's guards, to Cato's palace, in order to pass for Juba, in a place where they were both so very well known: he meets Juba there, and resolves to murder him with his own guards. Upon the guards appearing a little bashful, he threatens them:

'Hah! dastards, do you tremble!
Or act like men; or, by yon azure heav'n!'—

"But the guards still remaining restive, Sempronius himself attacks Juba, while each of the guards is representing Mr. Spectator's sign of the Gaper, awed, it seems, and terrified by Sempronius's threats. Juba kills Sempronius, and takes his own army prisoners, and carries them in triumph away to Cato. Now, I would fain know, if any part of Mr. Bayes's tragedy is so full of absurdity as this?

"Upon hearing the clash of swords, Lucia and Marcia come in. The question is, why no men come in upon hearing the noise of swords in the governor's hall? Where was the governor himself? Where were his guards? Where were his servants? Such an at-

tempt as this, so near the person of a governor of a place of war, was enough to alarm the whole garrison: and yet, for almost half an hour after Sempronius was killed, we find none of those appear, who were the likeliest in the world to be alarmed; and the noise of swords is made to draw only two poor women thither, who were most certain to run away from it. Upon Lucia and Marcia's coming in, Lucia appears in all the symptoms of an hysterical gentlewoman:

> '*Luc.* Sure 'twas the clash of swords! my troubl'd heart
> Is so cast down, and sunk amidst its sorrows,
> It throbs with fear, and aches at ev'ry sound!'

And immediately her old whimsey returns upon her:

> 'O Marcia, should thy brothers, for my sake—
> I die away with horrour at the thought.'

She fancies that there can be no cutting of throats, but it must be for her. If this is tragical, I would fain know what is comical. Well! upon this they spy the body of Sempronius; and Marcia, deluded by the habit, it seems, takes him for Juba; for says she,

> 'The face is muffl'd up within the garment.'

"Now, how a man could fight, and fall with his face muffled up in his garment, is, I think, a little hard to conceive! Besides, Juba, before he killed him, knew him to be Sempronius. It was not by his garment that he knew this; it was by his face then; his face, therefore, was not muffled. Upon seeing this man with the muffled face, Marcia falls a raving; and, owning her passion for the supposed defunct, begins to make his funeral oration. Upon which

Juba enters listening, I suppose on tiptoe; for I cannot imagine how any one can enter listening in any other posture. I would fain know how it came to pass, that during all this time he had sent nobody, no, not so much as a candle-snuffer, to take away the dead body of Sempronius. Well! but let us regard him listening. Having left his apprehension behind him, he, at first, applies what Marcia says to Sempronius. But finding at last, with much ado, that he himself is the happy man, he quits his eve-dropping, and discovers himself just time enough to prevent his being cuckolded by a dead man, of whom the moment before he had appeared so jealous; and greedily intercepts the bliss which was fondly designed for one who could not be the better for it. But here I must ask a question: how comes Juba to listen here, who had not listened before throughout the play? Or how comes he to be the only person of this tragedy who listens, when love and treason were so often talked in so publick a place as a hall? I am afraid the author was driven upon all these absurdities only to introduce this miserable mistake of Marcia; which, after all, is much below the dignity of tragedy, as any thing is which is the effect or result of trick.

"But let us come to the scenery of the fifth act. Cato appears first upon the scene, sitting in a thoughtful posture; in his hand Plato's treatise on the Immortality of the Soul, a drawn sword on the table by him. Now let us consider the place in which this sight is presented to us. The place, forsooth, is

a long hall. Let us suppose, that any one should place himself in this posture, in the midst of one of our halls in London; that he should appear *solus*, in a sullen posture, a drawn sword on the table by him; in his hand Plato's treatise on the Immortality of the Soul, translated lately by Bernard Lintot: I desire the reader to consider, whether such a person as this would pass, with them who beheld him, for a great patriot, a great philosopher, or a general, or for some whimsical person who fancied himself all these? and whether the people, who belonged to the family, would think that such a person had a design upon their midriffs or his own?

"In short, that Cato should set long enough, in the aforesaid posture, in the midst of this large hall, to read over Plato's treatise on the Immortality of the Soul, which is a lecture of two long hours; that he should propose to himself to be private there upon that occasion; that he should be angry with his son for intruding there; then, that he should leave this hall upon the pretence of sleep, give himself the mortal wound in his bedchamber, and then be brought back into that hall to expire, purely to show his good-breeding, and save his friends the trouble of coming up to his bedchamber; all this appears to me to be improbable, incredible, impossible."

Such is the censure of Dennis. There is, as Dryden expresses it, perhaps "too much horseplay in his raillery;" but if his jests are coarse, his arguments are strong. Yet, as we love better to be pleased than to be taught, Cato is read, and the critick is neglected.

Flushed with consciousness of these detections of absurdity in the conduct, he afterwards attacked the sentiments of Cato; but he then amused himself with petty cavils, and minute objections.

Of Addison's smaller poems, no particular mention is necessary; they have little that can employ or require a critick. The parallel of the princes and gods, in his verses to Kneller, is often happy, but is too well known to be quoted.

His translations, so far as I have compared them, want the exactness of a scholar. That he understood his authors cannot be doubted; but his versions will not teach others to understand them, being too licentiously paraphrastical. They are, however, for the most part, smooth and easy; and, what is the first excellence of a translator, such as may be read with pleasure by those who do not know the originals.

His poetry is polished and pure; the product of a mind too judicious to commit faults, but not sufficiently vigorous to attain excellence. He has sometimes a striking line, or a shining paragraph; but, in the whole, he is warm rather than fervid, and shows more dexterity than strength. He was, however, one of our earliest examples of correctness.

The versification which he had learned from Dryden, he debased rather than refined. His rhymes are often dissonant; in his Georgick he admits broken lines. He uses both triplets and alexandrines, but triplets more frequently in his translations than his other works. The mere structure of verses seems never to have engaged much of his care. But his

lines are very smooth in Rosamond, and too smooth in Cato.

Addison is now to be considered as a critick; a name which the present generation is scarcely willing to allow him. His criticism is condemned as tentative or experimental, rather than scientifick; and he is considered as deciding by taste[e] rather than by principles.

It is not uncommon, for those who have grown wise by the labour of others, to add a little of their own, and overlook their masters. Addison is now despised by some who, perhaps, would never have seen his defects, but by the lights which he afforded them. That he always wrote as he would think it necessary to write now, cannot be affirmed; his instructions were such as the character of his readers made proper. That general knowledge which now circulates in common talk, was in his time rarely to be found. Men not professing learning were not ashamed of ignorance; and, in the female world, any acquaintance with books was distinguished only to be censured. His purpose was to infuse literary curiosity, by gentle and unsuspected conveyance, into the gay, the idle, and the wealthy; he, therefore, presented knowledge in the most alluring form, not lofty and austere, but accessible and familiar. When he showed them their defects, he showed them, likewise, that they might be easily supplied. His attempt succeeded; inquiry was awakened, and comprehension expanded. An emulation of intellectual elegance

[e] Taste must decide. WARTON.

was excited, and, from his time to our own, life has been gradually exalted, and conversation purified and enlarged.

Dryden had, not many years before, scattered criticism over his prefaces with very little parsimony; but, though he sometimes condescended to be somewhat familiar, his manner was in general too scholastick for those who had yet their rudiments to learn, and found it not easy to understand their master. His observations were framed rather for those that were learning to write, than for those that read only to talk.

An instructer like Addison was now wanting, whose remarks being superficial, might be easily understood, and being just, might prepare the mind for more attainments. Had he presented Paradise Lost to the publick with all the pomp of system and severity of science, the criticism would, perhaps, have been admired, and the poem still have been neglected; but, by the blandishments of gentleness and facility, he has made Milton an universal favourite, with whom readers of every class think it necessary to be pleased.

He descended, now and then, to lower disquisitions; and, by a serious display of the beauties of Chevy-Chase, exposed himself to the ridicule of Wagstaffe, who bestowed a like pompous character on Tom Thumb; and to the contempt of Dennis, who, considering the fundamental position of his criticism, that Chevy-Chase pleases, and ought to please, because it is natural, observes, "that there

is a way of deviating from nature, by bombast or tumour, which soars above nature, and enlarges images beyond their real bulk; by affectation, which forsakes nature in quest of something unsuitable; and by imbecility, which degrades nature by faintness and diminution, by obscuring its appearances, and weakening its effects.'' In Chevy-Chase there is not much of either bombast or affectation; but there is chill and lifeless imbecility. The story cannot possibly be told in a manner that shall make less impression on the mind.

Before the profound observers of the present race repose too securely on the consciousness of their superiority to Addison, let them consider his Remarks on Ovid, in which may be found specimens of criticism sufficiently subtile and refined: let them peruse, likewise, his essays on Wit, and on the Pleasures of Imagination, in which he founds art on the base of nature, and draws the principles of invention from dispositions inherent in the mind of man with skill and elegance[f], such as his contemners will not easily attain.

As a describer of life and manners, he must be allowed to stand, perhaps, the first of the first rank. His humour, which, as Steele observes, is peculiar to himself, is so happily diffused as to give the grace of novelty to domestick scenes and daily occurrences. He never "outsteps the modesty of nature,'' nor raises merriment or wonder by the violation of truth. His figures neither divert by distortion, nor

[f] Far, in Dr. Warton's opinion, beyond Dryden.

amaze by aggravation. He copies life with so much fidelity, that he can be hardly said to invent; yet his exhibitions have an air so much original, that it is difficult to suppose them not merely the product of imagination.

As a teacher of wisdom, he may be confidently followed. His religion has nothing in it enthusiastick or superstitious: he appears neither weakly credulous, nor wantonly skeptical; his morality is neither dangerously lax, nor impracticably rigid. All the enchantment of fancy, and all the cogency of argument, are employed to recommend to the reader his real interest, the care of pleasing the author of his being. Truth is shown sometimes as the phantom of a vision; sometimes appears half-veiled in an allegory; sometimes attracts regard in the robes of fancy, and sometimes steps forth in the confidence of reason. She wears a thousand dresses, and in all is pleasing.

"Mille habet ornatus, mille decenter habet."

His prose is the model of the middle style; on grave subjects not formal, on light occasions not grovelling, pure without scrupulosity, and exact without apparent elaboration; always equable, and always easy, without glowing words or pointed sentences. Addison never deviates from his track to snatch a grace; he seeks no ambitious ornaments, and tries no hazardous innovations. His page is always luminous, but never blazes in unexpected splendour.

It was, apparently, his principal endeavour to avoid all harshness and severity of diction; he is,

therefore, sometimes verbose in his transitions and connexions, and sometimes descends too much to the language of conversation; yet if his language had been less idiomatical, it might have lost somewhat of its genuine Anglicism. What he attempted, he performed; he is never feeble, and he did not wish to be energetick[g]; he is never rapid, and he never stagnates. His sentences have neither studied amplitude, nor affected brevity: his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy. Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.

[g] But, says Dr. Warton, he *sometimes* is so; and, in another manuscript note, he adds, *often* so.

HUGHES

JOHN HUGHES, the son of a citizen of London, and of Anne Burgess, of an ancient family in Wiltshire, was born at Marlborough, July 29, 1677. He was educated at a private school; and though his advances in literature are in the Biographia very ostentatiously displayed, the name of his master is somewhat ungratefully concealed[h].

At nineteen he drew the plan of a tragedy; and paraphrased, rather too diffusely, the ode of Horace which begins "Integer vitæ." To poetry he added the science of musick, in which he seems to have attained considerable skill, together with the practice of design, or rudiments of painting.

His studies did not withdraw him wholly from business, nor did business hinder him from study. He had a place in the office of ordnance; and was secretary to several commissions for purchasing lands necessary to secure the royal docks at Chatham and Portsmouth; yet found time to acquaint himself with modern languages.

In 1697 he published a poem on the Peace of Ryswick: and, in 1699, another piece, called the Court of Neptune, on the return of king William, which he addressed to Mr. Montague, the general patron of the followers of the muses. The same year he produced a song on the duke of Gloucester's birthday.

[h] He was educated in a dissenting academy, of which the reverend Mr. Thomas Rowe was tutor; and was a fellow-student there with Dr. Isaac Watts, Mr. Samuel Say, and other persons of eminence. In the Horæ Lyricæ of Dr. Watts, is a poem to the memory of Mr. Rowe. H.

He did not confine himself to poetry, but cultivated other kinds of writing with great success; and about this time showed his knowledge of human nature by an essay on the Pleasure of being deceived. In 1702, he published, on the death of king William, a Pindarick ode, called the House of Nassau; and wrote another paraphrase on the "Otium Divos" of Horace.

In 1703, his ode on Musick was performed at Stationers' hall; and he wrote afterwards six cantatas, which were set to musick by the greatest master of that time, and seem intended to oppose or exclude the Italian opera, an exotick and irrational entertainment, which has been always combated, and always has prevailed.

His reputation was now so far advanced, that the publick began to pay reverence to his name; and he was solicited to prefix a preface to the translation of Boccalini, a writer whose satirical vein cost him his life in Italy, but who never, I believe, found many readers in this country, even though introduced by such powerful recommendation.

He translated Fontenelle's Dialogues of the Dead; and his version was, perhaps, read at that time, but is now neglected; for by a book not necessary, and owing its reputation wholly to its turn of diction, little notice can be gained but from those who can enjoy the graces of the original. To the dialogues of Fontenelle he added two composed by himself; and, though not only an honest but a pious man, dedicated his work to the earl of Wharton. He judged

skilfully enough of his own interest; for Wharton, when he went lord lieutenant to Ireland, offered to take Hughes with him, and establish him; but Hughes, having hopes or promises from another man in power, of some provision more suitable to his inclination, declined Wharton's offer, and obtained nothing from the other.

He translated the Miser of Molière, which he never offered to the stage; and occasionally amused himself with making versions of favourite scenes in other plays.

Being now received as a wit among the wits, he paid his contributions to literary undertakings, and assisted both the Tatler, Spectator, and Guardian. In 1712, he translated Vertot's History of the Revolution of Portugal; produced an Ode to the Creator of the World, from the Fragments of Orpheus; and brought upon the stage an opera, called Calypso and Telemachus, intended to show that the English language might be very happily adapted to musick. This was impudently opposed by those who were employed in the Italian opera; and, what cannot be told without indignation, the intruders had such interest with the duke of Shrewsbury, then lord chamberlain, who had married an Italian, as to obtain an obstruction of the profits, though not an inhibition of the performance.

There was, at this time, a project formed by Tonson for a translation of the Pharsalia by several hands; and Hughes englished the tenth book. But this design, as must often happen where the concurrence

of many is necessary, fell to the ground; and the whole work was afterwards performed by Rowe.

His acquaintance with the great writers of his time appears to have been very general; but of his intimacy with Addison there is a remarkable proof. It is told, on good authority, that Cato was finished and played by his persuasion. It had long wanted the last act, which he was desired by Addison to supply. If the request was sincere, it proceeded from an opinion, whatever it was, that did not last long; for when Hughes came in a week to show him his first attempt, he found half an act written by Addison himself.

He afterwards published the works of Spenser, with his life, a glossary, and a discourse on allegorical poetry; a work for which he was well qualified as a judge of the beauties of writing, but, perhaps, wanted an antiquary's knowledge of the obsolete words. He did not much revive the curiosity of the publick; for near thirty years elapsed before his edition was reprinted. The same year produced his Apollo and Daphne, of which the success was very earnestly promoted by Steele, who, when the rage of party did not misguide him, seems to have been a man of boundless benevolence.

Hughes had hitherto suffered the mortifications of a narrow fortune; but, in 1717, the lord chancellor Cowper set him at ease, by making him secretary to the commissions of the peace; in which he afterwards, by a particular request, desired his successor, lord Parker, to continue him. He had now affluence;

but such is human life, that he had it when his declining health could neither allow him long possession, nor quick enjoyment.

His last work was his tragedy, the Siege of Damascus, after which, a Siege became a popular title. This play, which still continues on the stage, and of which it is unnecessary to add a private voice to such continuance of approbation, is not acted or printed according to the author's original draught, or his settled intention. He had made Phocyas apostatize from his religion; after which the abhorrence of Eudocia would have been reasonable, his misery would have been just, and the horrours of his repentance exemplary. The players, however, required, that the guilt of Phocyas should terminate in desertion to the enemy; and Hughes, unwilling that his relations should lose the benefit of his work, complied with the alteration.

He was now weak with a lingering consumption, and not able to attend the rehearsal; yet was so vigorous in his faculties, that only ten days before his death he wrote the dedication to his patron lord Cowper. On February 17, 1719–20, the play was represented, and the author died. He lived to hear that it was well received; but paid no regard to the intelligence, being then wholly employed in the meditations of a departing christian.

A man of his character was, undoubtedly, regretted; and Steele devoted an essay, in the paper called the Theatre, to the memory of his virtues. His life is written in the Biographia with some degree of

favourable partiality; and an account of him is prefixed to his works by his relation, the late Mr. Duncombe, a man whose blameless elegance deserved the same respect.

The character of his genius I shall transcribe from the correspondence of Swift and Pope.

"A month ago," says Swift, "were sent me over, by a friend of mine, the works of John Hughes, esquire. They are in prose and verse. I never heard of the man in my life, yet I find your name as a subscriber. He is too grave a poet for me; and I think among the *mediocrists*, in prose as well as verse."

To this Pope returns: "To answer your question as to Mr. Hughes; what he wanted in genius, he made up as an honest man; but he was of the class you think him[1]."

In Spence's Collections Pope is made to speak of him with still less respect, as having no claim to poetical reputation but from his tragedy.

[1] This, Dr. Warton asserts, is very unjust censure; and in a note in his late edition of Pope's works, asks if "the author of such a tragedy as the Siege of Damascus was one of the *mediocribus?* Swift and Pope seem not to recollect the value and rank of an author who could write such a tragedy."

SHEFFIELD, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

JOHN SHEFFIELD, descended from a long series of illustrious ancestors, was born in 1649, the son of Edmund, earl of Mulgrave, who died in 1658[1]. The young lord was put into the hands of a tutor, with whom he was so little satisfied, that he got rid of him in a short time, and, at an age not exceeding twelve years, resolved to educate himself. Such a purpose, formed at such an age, and successfully prosecuted, delights as it is strange, and instructs as it is real.

His literary acquisitions are more wonderful, as those years in which they are commonly made were spent by him in the tumult of a military life, or the gaiety of a court. When war was declared against the Dutch, he went, at seventeen, on board the ship in which prince Rupert and the duke of Albemarle sailed, with the command of the fleet; but, by contrariety of winds, they were restrained from action. His zeal for the king's service was recompensed by the command of one of the independent troops of horse, then raised to protect the coast.

Next year he received a summons to parliament, which, as he was then but eighteen years old, the earl of Northumberland censured as at least indecent, and his objection was allowed. He had a quarrel with the earl of Rochester, which he has, perhaps, too ostentatiously related, as Rochester's surviving sister, the

[1] His mother was Elizabeth, one of the daughters of Lionel Cranfield, earl of Middlesex. M.

lady Sandwich, is said to have told him with very sharp reproaches.

When another Dutch war, 1672, broke out, he went again a volunteer in the ship which the celebrated lord Ossory commanded; and there made, as he relates, two curious remarks.

"I have observed two things, which I dare affirm, though not generally believed. One was, that the wind of a cannon bullet, though flying never so near, is incapable of doing the least harm; and, indeed, were it otherwise, no man above deck would escape. The other was, that a great shot may be sometimes avoided, even as it flies, by changing one's ground a little; for, when the wind sometimes blew away the smoke, it was so clear a sunshiny day, that we could easily perceive the bullets, that were half-spent, fall into the water, and from thence bound up again among us, which gives sufficient time for making a step or two on any side; though, in so swift a motion, 'tis hard to judge well in what line the bullet comes, which, if mistaken, may, by removing, cost a man his life, instead of saving it."

His behaviour was so favourably represented by lord Ossory, that he was advanced to the command of the Catharine, the best second-rate ship in the navy.

He afterwards raised a regiment of foot, and commanded it as colonel. The land-forces were sent ashore by prince Rupert; and he lived in the camp very familiarly with Schomberg. He was then appointed colonel of the old Holland regiment, together

with his own; and had the promise of a garter, which he obtained in his twenty-fifth year. He was, likewise, made gentleman of the bed-chamber. He afterwards went into the French service, to learn the art of war under Turenne, but staid only a short time. Being, by the duke of Monmouth, opposed in his pretensions to the first troop of horse-guards, he, in return, made Monmouth suspected by the duke of York. He was not long after, when the unlucky Monmouth fell into disgrace, recompensed with the lieutenancy of Yorkshire and the government of Hull.

Thus rapidly did he make his way both to military and civil honours and employments; yet, busy as he was, he did not neglect his studies, but, at least, cultivated poetry; in which he must have been early considered as uncommonly skilful, if it be true which is reported, that, when he was not yet twenty years old, his recommendation advanced Dryden to the laurel.

The Moors having besieged Tangier, he was sent, 1680, with two thousand men to its relief. A strange story is told of danger to which he was intentionally exposed in a leaky ship, to gratify some resentful jealousy of the king, whose health he, therefore, would never permit at his table, till he saw himself in a safer place. His voyage was prosperously performed in three weeks; and the Moors, without a contest, retired before him.

In this voyage he composed the Vision; a licentious poem, such as was fashionable in those times,

with little power of invention or propriety of sentiment.

At his return he found the king kind, who, perhaps, had never been angry; and he continued a wit and a courtier, as before.

At the succession of king James, to whom he was intimately known, and by whom he thought himself beloved, he naturally expected still brighter sunshine; but all know how soon that reign began to gather clouds. His expectations were not disappointed; he was immediately admitted into the privy council, and made lord chamberlain. He accepted a place in the high commission, without knowledge, as he declared after the revolution, of its illegality. Having few religious scruples, he attended the king to mass, and kneeled with the rest, but had no disposition to receive the Romish faith, or to force it upon others; for when the priests, encouraged by his appearances of compliance, attempted to convert him, as he told them, as Burnet has recorded, that he was willing to receive instruction, and that he had taken much pains to believe in God, who made the world and all men in it; but that he should not be easily persuaded "that man was quits, and made God again."

A pointed sentence is bestowed by successive transmission on the last whom it will fit: this censure of transubstantiation, whatever be its value, was uttered long ago by Anne Askew, one of the first sufferers for the protestant religion, who, in the time of Henry the eighth, was tortured in the Tower;

concerning which there is reason to wonder that it was not known to the historian of the reformation.

In the revolution he acquiesced, though he did not promote it. There was once a design of associating him in the invitation of the prince of Orange; but the earl of Shrewsbury discouraged the attempt, by declaring that Mulgrave would never concur. This king William afterwards told him; and asked what he would have done if the proposal had been made? "Sir," said he, "I would have discovered it to the king whom I then served." To which king William replied, "I cannot blame you."

Finding king James irremediably excluded, he voted for the conjunctive sovereignty, upon this principle, that he thought the titles of the prince and his consort equal, and it would please the prince, their protector, to have a share in the sovereignty. This vote gratified king William; yet, either by the king's distrust or his own discontent, he lived some years without employment. He looked on the king with malevolence, and, if his verses or his prose may be credited, with contempt. He was, notwithstanding this aversion or indifference, made marquis of Normanby, 1694; but still opposed the court on some important questions; yet, at last, he was received into the cabinet council, with a pension of three thousand pounds.

At the accession of queen Anne, whom he is said to have courted when they were both young, he was highly favoured. Before her coronation, 1702, she made him lord privy seal, and, soon after, lord lieu-

tenant of the north Riding of Yorkshire. He was then named commissioner for treating with the Scots about the union; and was made, next year, first, duke of Normanby, and then of Buckinghamshire, there being suspected to be somewhere a latent claim to the title of Buckingham[k].

Soon after, becoming jealous of the duke of Marlborough, he resigned the privy seal, and joined the discontented tories in a motion, extremely offensive to the queen, for inviting the princess Sophia to England. The queen courted him back with an offer no less than that of the chancellorship; which he refused. He now retired from business, and built that house in the Park, which is now the queen's, upon ground granted by the crown.

When the ministry was changed, 1710, he was made lord chamberlain of the household, and concurred in all transactions of that time, except that he endeavoured to protect the Catalans. After the queen's death, he became a constant opponent of the court; and, having no publick business, is supposed to have amused himself by writing his two tragedies. He died February 24, 1720–21.

He was thrice married; by his first two wives he

[k] In the earliest editions of the duke's works he is styled duke of Buckingham; and Walpole, in his Catalogue of Noble Authors, mentions a wish, cherished by Sheffield, to be confounded with his predecessor in the title; "but he would more easily," remarks Walpole, sarcastically, "have been mistaken with the other Buckingham, if he had not written at all." Burnet also, and other authorities, speak of him under the title of duke of Buckingham. His epitaph, being in Latin, will not settle the point. It is to be regretted, therefore, that Johnson adduced no better evidence for his doubt than his own unsupported assertion. Ed.

had no children; by his third, who was the daughter of king James, by the countess of Dorchester, and the widow of the earl of Anglesey, he had, besides other children that died early, a son born in 1716, who died in 1735, and put an end to the line of Sheffield. It is observable, that the duke's three wives were all widows. The dutchess died in 1742.

His character is not to be proposed as worthy of imitation. His religion he may be supposed to have learned from Hobbes; and his morality was such as naturally proceeds from loose opinions. His sentiments with respect to women he picked up in the court of Charles; and his principles concerning property were such as a gaming-table supplies. He was censured as covetous, and has been defended by an instance of inattention to his affairs; as if a man might not at once be corrupted by avarice and idleness. He is said, however, to have had much tenderness, and to have been very ready to apologize for his violences of passion.

He is introduced into this collection only as a poet; and, if we credit the testimony of his contemporaries, he was a poet of no vulgar rank. But favour and flattery are now at an end; criticism is no longer softened by his bounties, or awed by his splendour; and, being able to take a more steady view, discovers him to be a writer that sometimes glimmers, but rarely shines; feebly laborious, and, at best, but pretty. His songs are upon common topicks; he hopes, and grieves, and repents, and despairs, and rejoices, like any other maker of little

stanzas: to be great, he hardly tries; to be gay, is hardly in his power[1].

In the Essay on Satire he was always supposed to have the help of Dryden. His Essay on Poetry is the great work for which he was praised by Roscommon, Dryden, and Pope; and, doubtless, by many more, whose eulogies have perished.

Upon this piece he appears to have set a high value; for he was all his life improving it by successive revisals, so that there is scarcely any poem to be found of which the last edition differs more from the first. Amongst other changes, mention is made of some compositions of Dryden, which were written after the first appearance of the essay.

At the time when this work first appeared, Milton's fame was not yet fully established, and, therefore, Tasso and Spenser were set before him. The two last lines were these. The epick poet, says he,

> Must above Milton's lofty flights prevail,
> Succeed where great Torquato, and where greater Spenser, fail.

The last line in succeeding editions was shortened,

[1] The life of this peer takes up fourteen pages and a half in folio, in the General Dictionary, where it has little pretensions to occupy a couple: but his pious relict was always purchasing places for him, herself, and their son, in every suburb of the temple of fame; a tenure, against which, of all others, quo-warrantos are sure to take place. The author of the article in the dictionary calls the duke one of the most beautiful prose writers, and greatest poets, of his age: which is also, he says, proved by the finest writers, his contemporaries; certificates that have little weight, where the merit is not proved by the author's own works. It is certain, that his grace's compositions in prose have nothing extraordinary in them; his poetry is most indifferent, and the greatest part of both is already fallen into total neglect." Walpole's Noble Authors, vol. i. p. 436 of his works.

and the order of names continued; but now Milton is at last advanced to the highest place, and the passage thus adjusted:

> Must above Tasso's lofty flights prevail,
> Succeed where Spenser, and ev'n Milton, fail.

Amendments are seldom made without some token of a rent: *lofty* does not suit Tasso so well as Milton.

One celebrated line seems to be borrowed. The essay calls a perfect character,

> A faultless monster which the world ne'er saw.

Scaliger, in his poems, terms Virgil "sine labe monstrum." Sheffield can scarcely be supposed to have read Scaliger's poetry; perhaps he found the words in a quotation.

Of this essay, which Dryden has exalted so highly, it may be justly said, that the precepts are judicious, sometimes new, and often happily expressed; but there are, after all the emendations, many weak lines, and some strange appearances of negligence; as, when he gives the laws of elegy, he insists upon connexion and coherence; without which says he,

> 'Tis epigram, 'tis point, 'tis what you will;
> But not an elegy, nor writ with skill,
> No Panegyrick, nor a Cooper's Hill.

Who would not suppose that Waller's Panegyrick and Denham's Cooper's Hill were elegies?

His verses are often insipid; but his memoirs are lively and agreeable; he had the perspicuity and elegance of an historian, but not the fire and fancy of a poet.

PRIOR

MATTHEW PRIOR is one of those that have burst out from an obscure original to great eminence. He was born July 21, 1664, according to some, at Winburn, in Dorsetshire, of I know not what parents; others say, that he was the son of a joiner of London: he was, perhaps, willing enough to leave his birth unsettled[m], in hope, like Don Quixote, that the historian of his actions might find him some illustrious alliance.

He is supposed to have fallen, by his father's death, into the hands of his uncle, a vintner[n], near Charing-cross, who sent him for some time to Dr. Busby, at Westminster; but, not intending to give him any education beyond that of the school, took him, when he was well advanced in literature, to his own house, where the earl of Dorset, celebrated for patronage of genius, found him by chance, as Burnet relates, reading Horace, and was so well pleased with his proficiency, that he undertook the care and cost of his academical education.

[m] The difficulty of settling Prior's birthplace is great. In the register of his college he is called, at his admission by the president, Matthew Prior, of Winburn, in Middlesex; by himself, next day, Matthew Prior, of Dorsetshire, in which county, not in Middlesex, Winborn, or Winborne, as it stands in the Villare, is found. When he stood candidate for his fellowship, five years afterwards, he was registered again by himself as of Middlesex. The last record ought to be preferred, because it was made upon oath. It is observable, that, as a native of Winborne, he is styled filius Georgii Prior, generosi; not consistently with the common count of the meanness of his birth. Dr. J.

[n] Samuel Prior kept the Rummer tavern near Charing-cross, in 1685. The annual feast of the nobility and gentry living in the parish of St. Martin in the Fields was held at his house, Oct. 14, that year. N.

He entered his name in St. John's college, at Cambridge, in 1682, in his eighteenth year; and it may be reasonably supposed that he was distinguished among his contemporaries. He became a bachelor, as is usual, in four years[o]; and two years afterwards wrote the poem on the Deity, which stands first in his volume.

It is the established practice of that college, to send every year to the earl of Exeter some poems upon sacred subjects, in acknowledgement of a benefaction enjoyed by them from the bounty of his ancestor. On this occasion were those verses written, which, though nothing is said of their success, seems to have recommended him to some notice; for his praise of the countess's musick, and his lines on the famous picture of Seneca, afford reason for imagining that he was more or less conversant with that family.

The same year, 1688, he published the City Mouse and Country Mouse, to ridicule Dryden's Hind and Panther, in conjunction with Mr. Montague. There is a story[p] of great pain suffered, and of tears shed, on this occasion, by Dryden, who thought it hard that "an old man should be so treated by those to whom he had always been civil." By tales like these is the envy, raised by superiour abilities, every day gratified: when they are attacked, every one hopes to see them humbled; what is hoped is readily be-

[o] He was admitted to his bachelor's degree in 1686; and to his master's, by mandate, in 1700. N.

[p] Spence.

lieved; and what is believed is confidently told. Dryden had been more accustomed to hostilities, than that such enemies should break his quiet; and if we can suppose him vexed, it would be hard to deny him sense enough to conceal his uneasiness.

The City Mouse and Country Mouse procured its authors more solid advantages than the pleasure of fretting Dryden; for they were both speedily preferred. Montague, indeed, obtained the first notice, with some degree of discontent, as it seems, in Prior, who, probably, knew that his own part of the performance was the best. He had not, however, much reason to complain; for he came to London, and obtained such notice, that, in 1691, he was sent to the congress at the Hague as secretary to the embassy. In this assembly of princes and nobles, to which Europe has, perhaps, scarcely seen any thing equal, was formed the grand alliance against Lewis, which, at last, did not produce effects proportionate to the magnificence of the transaction.

The conduct of Prior, in this splendid initiation into publick business, was so pleasing to king William, that he made him one of the gentlemen of his bedchamber; and he is supposed to have passed some of the next years in the quiet cultivation of literature and poetry.

The death of queen Mary, in 1695, produced a subject for all the writers; perhaps no funeral was ever so poetically attended. Dryden, indeed, as a man discountenanced and deprived, was silent; but scarcely any other maker of verses omitted to bring

his tribute of tuneful sorrow. An emulation of elegy was universal. Maria's praise was not confined to the English language, but fills a great part of the Musæ Anglicanæ.

Prior, who was both a poet and a courtier, was too diligent to miss this opportunity of respect. He wrote a long ode, which was presented to the king, by whom it was not likely to be ever read.

In two years he was secretary to another embassy at the treaty of Ryswick, in 1697[q]; and next year had the same office at the court of France, where he is said to have been considered with great distinction.

As he was one day surveying the apartments at Versailles, being shown the victories of Lewis, painted by Le Brun, and asked whether the king of England's palace had any such decorations: "The monuments of my master's actions," said he, "are to be seen every where but in his own house." The pictures of Le Brun are not only in themselves sufficiently ostentatious, but were explained by inscriptions so arrogant, that Boileau and Racine thought it necessary to make them more simple.

He was, in the following year, at Loo with the king; from whom, after a long audience, he carried orders to England, and upon his arrival became under-secretary of state in the earl of Jersey's office; a post which he did not retain long, because Jersey

[q] He received, in September, 1697, a present of two hundred guineas from the lords justices, for his trouble in bringing over the treaty of peace. N.

was removed; but he was soon made commissioner of trade.

This year, 1700, produced one of his longest and most splendid compositions, the Carmen Seculare, in which he exhausts all his powers of celebration. I mean not to accuse him of flattery; he probably thought all that he writ, and retained as much veracity as can be properly exacted from a poet professedly encomiastick. King William supplied copious materials for either verse or prose. His whole life had been action, and none ever denied him the resplendent qualities of steady resolution and personal courage. He was really, in Prior's mind, what he represents him in his verses; he considered him as a hero, and was accustomed to say, that he praised others in compliance with the fashion, but that in celebrating king William he followed his inclination. To Prior gratitude would dictate praise, which reason would not refuse.

Among the advantages to arise from the future years of William's reign, he mentions a society for useful arts, and, among them,

> Some that with care true eloquence shall teach,
> And to just idioms fix our doubtful speech;
> That from our writers distant realms may know
> The thanks we to our monarch owe,
> And schools profess our tongue through ev'ry land,
> That has invok'd his aid, or bless'd his hand.

Tickell, in his Prospect of Peace, has the same hope of a new academy:

> In happy chains our daring language bound,
> Shall sport no more in arbitrary sound.

Whether the similitude of those passages which exhibit the same thought, on the same occasion, proceeded from accident or imitation, is not easy to determine. Tickell might have been impressed with his expectation by Swift's Proposal for ascertaining the English Language, then lately published.

In the parliament that met in 1701, he was chosen representative of East Grinstead. Perhaps it was about this time that he changed his party; for he voted for the impeachment of those lords who had persuaded the king to the partition-treaty, a treaty in which he had himself been ministerially employed.

A great part of queen Anne's reign was a time of war, in which there was little employment for negotiators, and Prior had, therefore, leisure to make or to polish verses. When the battle of Blenheim called forth all the versemen, Prior, among the rest, took care to show his delight in the increasing honour of his country, by an epistle to Boileau.

He published, soon afterwards, a volume of poems, with the encomiastick character of his deceased patron, the duke of Dorset[r]: it began with the College Exercise, and ended with the Nut-brown Maid.

The battle of Ramilles soon afterwards, in 1706, excited him to another effort of poetry. On this occasion he had fewer or less formidable rivals; and it would be not easy to name any other composition produced by that event which is now remembered.

Every thing has its day. Through the reigns of William and Anne no prosperous event passed un-

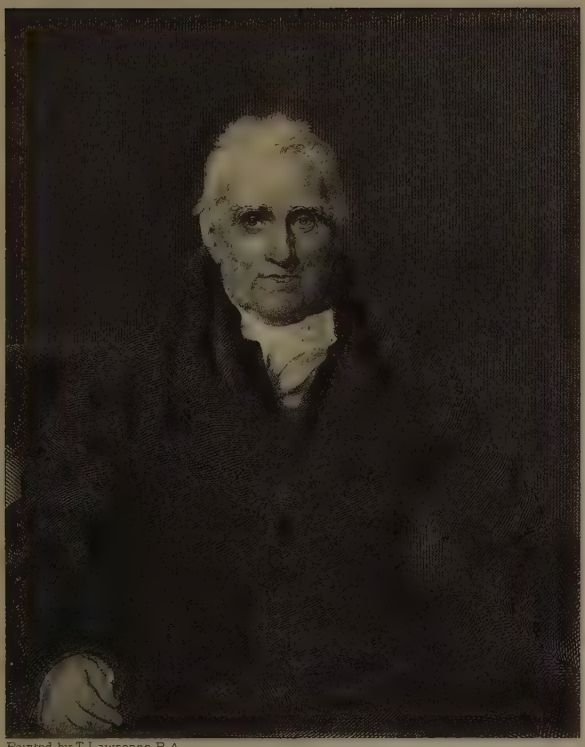
[r] It should be the earl of Dorset.

dignified by poetry. In the last war, when France was disgraced and overpowered in every quarter of the globe, when Spain, coming to her assistance, only shared her calamities, and the name of an Englishman was reverenced through Europe, no poet was heard amidst the general acclamation; the fame of our counsellors and heroes was entrusted to the Gazetteer.

The nation, in time, grew weary of the war, and the queen grew weary of her ministers. The war was burdensome, and the ministers were insolent. Harley and his friends began to hope that they might, by driving the whigs from court and from power, gratify, at once, the queen and the people. There was now a call for writers, who might convey intelligence of past abuses, and show the waste of publick money, the unreasonable conduct of the allies, the avarice of generals, the tyranny of minions, and the general danger of approaching ruin.

For this purpose a paper, called the Examiner, was periodically published, written, as it happened, by any wit of the party, and sometimes, as is said, by Mrs. Manley. Some are owned by Swift; and one, in ridicule of Garth's verses to Godolphin upon the loss of his place, was written by Prior, and answered by Addison, who appears to have known the author either by conjecture or intelligence.

The tories, who were now in power, were in haste to end the war; and Prior, being recalled, 1710, to his former employment of making treaties, was sent, July, 1711, privately to Paris with propositions of



Painted by T. Lawrence R A

JOHN SCOTT, EARL OF ELDON

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peace. He was remembered at the French court; and, returning in about a month, brought with him the abbé Gaultier, and M. Mesnager, a minister from France, invested with full powers.

This transaction not being avowed, Mackay, the master of the Dover packet-boat, either zealously or officiously, seized Prior and his associates at Canterbury. It is easily supposed that they were soon released.

The negotiation was begun at Prior's house, where the queen's ministers met Mesnager, September 20, 1711, and entered privately upon the great business. The importance of Prior appears from the mention made of him by St. John in his letter to the queen.

"My lord treasurer moved, and all my lords were of the same opinion, that Mr. Prior should be added to those who are empowered to sign; the reason for which is, because he, having personally treated with monsieur de Torcy, is the best witness we can produce of the sense in which the general preliminary engagements are entered into: besides which, as he is the best versed in matters of trade of all your majesty's servants who have been trusted in this secret, if you shall think fit to employ him in the future treaty of commerce, it will be of consequence that he has been a party concerned in concluding that convention, which must be the rule of this treaty."

The assembly of this important night was, in some degree, clandestine, the design of treating not being yet openly declared, and, when the whigs re-

turned to power, was aggravated to a charge of high treason; though, as Prior remarks in his imperfect answer to the report of the committee of secrecy, no treaty ever was made without private interviews and preliminary discussions.

My business is not the history of the peace, but the life of Prior. The conferences began at Utrecht on the 1st of January, 1711–12, and the English plenipotentiaries arrived on the 15th. The ministers of the different potentates conferred and conferred; but the peace advanced so slowly that speedier methods were found necessary; and Bolingbroke was sent to Paris to adjust differences with less formality; Prior either accompanied him or followed him, and, after his departure, had the appointments and authority of an ambassador, though no publick character.

By some mistake of the queen's orders, the court of France had been disgusted; and Bolingbroke says in his letter, "Dear Mat, hide the nakedness of thy country, and give the best turn thy fertile brain will furnish thee with to the blunders of thy countrymen, who are not much better politicians than the French are poets."

Soon after the duke of Shrewsbury went on a formal embassy to Paris. It is related by Boyer, that the intention was to have joined Prior in the same commission, but that Shrewsbury refused to be associated with a man so meanly born. Prior, therefore, continued to act without a title, till the duke returned, next year, to England, and then he assumed the style and dignity of ambassador.

But, while he continued in appearance a private man, he was treated with confidence by Lewis, who sent him with a letter to the queen, written in favour of the elector of Bavaria. "I shall expect," says he, "with impatience, the return of Mr. Prior, whose conduct is very agreeable to me." And while the duke of Shrewsbury was still at Paris, Bolingbroke wrote to Prior thus: "Monsieur de Torcy has a confidence in you; make use of it, once for all, upon this occasion, and convince him thoroughly, that we must give a different turn to our parliament and our people, according to their resolution at this crisis."

Prior's publick dignity and splendour commenced in August, 1713, and continued till the August following; but I am afraid that, according to the usual fate of greatness, it was attended with some perplexities and mortifications. He had not all that is customarily given to ambassadors; he hints to the queen, in an imperfect poem, that he had no service of plate; and it appeared, by the debts which he contracted, that his remittances were not punctually made.

On the 1st of August, 1714, ensued the downfal of the tories, and the degradation of Prior. He was recalled; but was not able to return, being detained by the debts which he had found it necessary to contract, and which were not discharged before March, though his old friend Montague was now at the head of the treasury.

He returned then as soon as he could, and was

welcomed, on the 25th of March, 1715, by a warrant, but was, however, suffered to live in his own house, under the custody of the messenger, till he was examined before a committee of the privy council, of which Mr. Walpole was chairman, and lord Coningsby, Mr. Stanhope, and Mr. Lechmere, were the principal interrogators; who, in this examination, of which there is printed an account not unentertaining, behaved with the boisterousness of men elated by recent authority. They are represented as asking questions sometimes vague, sometimes insidious, and writing answers different from those which they received. Prior, however, seems to have been overpowered by their turbulence; for he confesses that he signed what, if he had ever come before a legal judicature, he should have contradicted or explained away. The oath was administered by Boscawen, a Middlesex justice, who, at last, was going to write his attestation on the wrong side of the paper.

They were very industrious to find some charge against Oxford; and asked Prior, with great earnestness, who was present when the preliminary articles were talked of or signed at his house? He told them, that either the earl of Oxford or the duke of Shrewsbury was absent, but he could not remember which; an answer which perplexed them, because it supplied no accusation against either. "Could any thing be more absurd," says he, "or more inhuman, than to propose to me a question, by the answering of which I might, according to them, prove myself a traitor? And notwithstanding their solemn promise, that

nothing which I could say should hurt myself, I had no reason to trust them; for they violated that promise about five hours after. However, I owned I was there present. Whether this was wisely done or no, I leave to my friends to determine."

When he had signed the paper, he was told by Walpole, that the committee were not satisfied with his behaviour, nor could give such an account of it to the commons as might merit favour; and that they now thought a stricter confinement necessary than to his own house. "Here," says he, "Boscawen played the moralist, and Coningsby the christian, but both very awkwardly." The messenger, in whose custody he was to be placed, was then called, and very decently asked by Coningsby, "if his house was secured by bars and bolts?" The messenger answered, "No," with astonishment. At which Coningsby very angrily said, "Sir, you must secure this prisoner; it is for the safety of the nation: if he escape, you shall answer for it."

They had already printed their report; and in this examination were endeavouring to find proofs.

He continued thus confined for some time; and Mr. Walpole, June 10, 1715, moved for an impeachment against him. What made him so acrimonious does not appear: he was by nature no thirster for blood. Prior was, a week after, committed to close custody, with orders that "no person should be admitted to see him without leave from the speaker."

When, two years after, an act of grace was passed, he was excepted, and continued still in custody,

which he had made less tedious by writing his Alma. He was, however, soon after discharged.

He had now his liberty, but he had nothing else. Whatever the profit of his employments might have been, he had always spent it; and, at the age of fifty-three, was, with all his abilities, in danger of penury, having yet no solid revenue but from the fellowship of his college, which, when in his exaltation he was censured for retaining it, he said, he could live upon at last.

Being, however, generally known and esteemed, he was encouraged to add other poems to those which he had printed, and to publish them by subscription. The expedient succeeded by the industry of many friends, who circulated the proposals[5], and the care of some, who, it is said, withheld the money from him, lest he should squander it. The price of the volume was two guineas; the whole collection was four thousand; to which lord Harley, the son of the earl of Oxford, to whom he had invariably adhered, added an equal sum for the purchase of Downhall, which Prior was to enjoy during life, and Harley after his decease.

He had now, what wits and philosophers have often wished, the power of passing the day in contemplative tranquillity. But it seems that busy men seldom live long in a state of quiet. It is not unlikely that his health declined. He complains of deafness; "for," says he, "I took little care of my ears while I was not sure if my head was my own."

[5] Swift obtained *many* subscriptions for him in Ireland. H.

Of any occurrences in his remaining life I have found no account. In a letter to Swift, "I have," says he, "treated lady Harriot at Cambridge, (a fellow of a college treat!) and spoke verses to her in a gown and cap! What, the plenipotentiary, so far concerned in the damned peace at Utrecht! the man that makes up half the volume of terse prose, that makes up the report of the committee, speaking verses! Sic est, homo sum."

He died at Wimpole, a seat of the earl of Oxford, on the 18th of September, 1721, and was buried in Westminster; where, on a monument, for which, as the "last piece of human vanity," he left five hundred pounds, is engraven this epitaph:

Sui temporis historiam meditanti,
Paulatim obrepens febris
Operi simul et vitæ filum abrupit,
Sept. 18, An. Dom. 1721. Ætat. 57.
H. S. E.
Vir eximius
Serenissimis
Regi Gulielmo, reginæque Mariæ,
In congressione fœderatorum
Hagæ anno 1690 celebrata;
Deinde Magnæ Britanniæ legatis;
Tum iis,
Qui anno 1697 pacem Ryswicki confecerunt;
Tum iis,
Qui apud Gallos annis proximis legationem obierunt;
Eodem etiam anno, 1697, in Hibernia
Secretarius;
Nec non in utroque honorabili consessu
Eorum,
Qui anno 1700 ordiandis commercii negotiis,
Quique anno 1711 dirigendis portorii rebus,
Præsidebant,
Commissionarius;

Postremo
Ab Anna,
Felicissimæ memoriæ regina,
Ad Ludovicum XIV. Galliæ regem
Missus anno 1711
De pace stabilienda,
(Pace etiamnum durante
Diuque ut boni jam omnus sperant duratura)
Cum summa potestate legatus;
MATTHÆUS PRIOR, armiger:
Qui
Hos omnes, quibus cumulatus est, titulos
Humanitatis, ingenii, eruditionis laude
Superavit;
Cui enim nascenti faciles arriserant musæ.
Hunc puerum schola hic regia perpolivit;
Juvenem in collegio S'ti Johannis
Cantabrigia optimis scientiis instruxit;
Virum denique auxit; et perfecit.
Multa cum viris principibus consuetudo;
Ita natus, ita institutus,
A vatum choro avelli nunquam potuit,
Sed solebat sæpe rerum civilium gravitatem
Amœniorum literarum studiis condire:
Et cum omne adeo poetices genus
Haud infeliciter tentaret,
Tum in fabellis concinne lepideque texendis
Mirus artifex
Neminem habuit parem.
Hæc liberalis animi oblectamenta,
Quam nullo illi labore constiterint,
Facile ii perspexere, quibus usus est amici;
Apud quos urbanitatum et leporum plenus
Cum ad rem, quæcunque forte inciderat,
Apte varie copioseque alluderet,
Interea nihil quæsitum, nihil vi expressum
Videbatur,
Sed omnia ultro effluere,
Et quasi jugi e fonte affatim exuberare,
Ita suos tandem dubios reliquit,
Essetne in scriptis, poeta elegantior,
An in convictu, comes jucundior.

Of Prior, eminent as he was, both by his abilities and station, very few memorials have been left by his contemporaries; the account, therefore, must now be destitute of his private character and familiar practices. He lived at a time when the rage of party detected all which it was any man's interest to hide; and, as little ill is heard of Prior, it is certain that not much was known. He was not afraid of provoking censure; for, when he forsook the whigs[t], under whose patronage he first entered the world, he became a tory, so ardent and determinate, that he did not willingly consort with men of different opinions. He was one of the sixteen tories who met weekly, and agreed to address each other by the title of *brother;* and seems to have adhered, not only by concurrence of political designs, but by peculiar affection, to the earl of Oxford and his family. With how much confidence he was trusted has been already told.

He was, however, in Pope's[u] opinion, fit only to make verses, and less qualified for business than Addison himself. This was, surely, said without consideration. Addison, exalted to a high place, was forced into degradation by the sense of his own incapacity; Prior, who was employed by men very capable of estimating his value, having been secretary to one embassy, had, when great abilities were again wanted, the same office another time; and was, after so much experience of his knowledge and dexterity, at last sent to transact a negotiation in the highest degree

[t] Spence.

[u] Spence.

arduous and important; for which he was qualified, among other requisites, in the opinion of Bolingbroke, by his influence upon the French minister, and by skill in questions of commerce above other men.

Of his behaviour in the lighter parts of life, it is too late to get much intelligence. One of his answers to a boastful Frenchman has been related; and to an impertinent he made another equally proper. During his embassy, he sat at the opera by a man, who, in his rapture, accompanied with his own voice the principal singer. Prior fell to railing at the performer with all the terms of reproach that he could collect, till the Frenchman, ceasing from his song, began to expostulate with him for his harsh censure of a man who was confessedly the ornament of the stage. "I know all that," says the ambassador, "mais il chante si haut, que je ne saurais vous entendre."

In a gay French company, where every one sang a little song or stanza, of which the burden was, "Bannissons la mélancolie;" when it came to his turn to sing, after the performance of a young lady that sat next to him, he produced these extemporary lines:

Mais cette voix, et ces beaux yeux,
Font Cupidon trop dangereux;
Et je suis triste quand je crie,
Bannissons la mélancolie.

Tradition represents him as willing to descend from the dignity of the poet and the statesman to the low delights of mean company. His Chloe, prob-

ably, was sometimes ideal; but the woman with whom he cohabited was a despicable drab[v] of the lowest species. One of his wenches, perhaps Chloe, while he was absent from his house, stole his plate, and ran away; as was related by a woman who had been his servant. Of this propensity to sordid converse I have seen an account so seriously ridiculous, that it seems to deserve insertion[w].

"I have been assured that Prior, after having spent the evening with Oxford, Bolingbroke, Pope, and Swift, would go and smoke a pipe, and drink a bottle of ale, with a common soldier and his wife, in Long-acre, before he went to bed; not from any remains of the lowness of his original, as one said, but, I suppose, that his faculties,

> "Strain'd to the height,
> In that celestial colloquy sublime,
> Dazzled and spent, sunk down, and sought repair."

Poor Prior! why was he so *strained*, and in such *want* of *repair*, after a conversation with men, not, in the opinion of the world, much wiser than himself? But such are the conceits of speculatists, who *strain* their *faculties* to find in a mine what lies upon the surface.

His opinions, so far as the means of judging are left us, seem to have been right; but his life was, it seems, irregular, negligent, and sensual.

Prior has written with great variety, and his variety has made him popular. He has tried all styles,

[v] Spence; and see Gent. Mag. vol. lvii. p. 1039.
[w] Richardsoniana.

from the grotesque to the solemn, and has not so failed in any as to incur derision or disgrace.

His works may be distinctly considered, as comprising Tales, Love-verses, Occasional Poems, Alma, and Solomon.

His Tales have obtained general approbation, being written with great familiarity and sprightliness; the language is easy, but seldom gross, and the numbers smooth without appearance of care. Of these tales there are only four. The Ladle; which is introduced by a preface, neither necessary nor pleasing, neither grave nor merry. Paulo Purganti; which has likewise a preface, but of more value than the tale. Hans Carvel, not over-decent; and Protogenes and Apelles, an old story, mingled, by an affectation not disagreeable, with modern images. The Young Gentleman in Love has hardly a just claim to the title of a tale. I know not whether he be the original author of any tale which he has given us. The adventure of Hans Carvel has passed through many successions of merry wits; for it is to be found in Aristo's satires, and is, perhaps, yet older[x]. But the merit of such stories is the art of telling them.

In his amorous effusions he is less happy; for they are not dictated by nature or by passion, and have neither gallantry nor tenderness. They have the coldness of Cowley, without his wit, the dull exercises of a skilful versifier, resolved, at all adventures, to write something about Chloe, and trying to be amorous by dint of study. His fictions, therefore, are

[x] It is to be found in Poggii Facetiæ. J. B.

mythological. Venus, after the example of the Greek epigram, asks when she was seen *naked and bathing*. Then Cupid is *mistaken;* then Cupid is *disarmed;* then he loses his darts to Ganymede; then Jupiter sends him a summons by Mercury. Then Chloe goes a-hunting, with an *ivory quiver graceful at her side;* Diana mistakes her for one of her nymphs, and Cupid laughs at the blunder. All this is, surely, despicable; and even when he tries to act the lover, without the help of gods or goddesses, his thoughts are unaffecting or remote. He talks not "like a man of this world."

The greatest of all his amorous essays is Henry and Emma; a dull and tedious dialogue, which excites neither esteem for the man, nor tenderness for the woman. The example of Emma, who resolves to follow an outlawed murderer wherever fear and guilt shall drive him, deserves no imitation; and the experiment by which Henry tries the lady's constancy, is such as must end either in infamy to her, or in disappointment to himself.

His occasional poems necessarily lost part of their value, as their occasions, being less remembered, raised less emotion. Some of them, however, are preserved by their inherent excellence. The burlesque of Boileau's Ode on Namur has, in some parts, such airiness and levity as will always procure it readers, even among those who cannot compare it with the original. The epistle to Boileau is not so happy. The poems to the king are now perused only by young students, who read merely that they may

learn to write; and of Carmen Seculare, I cannot but suspect that I might praise or censure it by caprice, without danger of detection; for who can be supposed to have laboured through it? Yet the time has been when this neglected work was so popular, that it was translated into Latin by no common master.

His poem on the battle of Ramilles is necessarily tedious by the form of the stanza: an uniform mass of ten lines, thirty-five times repeated, inconsequential and slightly connected, must weary both the ear and the understanding. His imitation of Spenser, which consists principally in *I ween* and *I weet*, without exclusion of later modes of speech, makes his poem neither ancient nor modern. His mention of Mars and Bellona, and his comparison of Marlborough to the eagle that bears the thunder of Jupiter, are all puerile and unaffecting; and yet more despicable is the long tale told by Lewis in his despair, of Brute and Troynovante, and the teeth of Cadmus, with his similes of the raven and eagle, and wolf and lion. By the help of such easy fictions, and vulgar topicks, without acquaintance with life, and without knowledge of art or nature, a poem of any length, cold and lifeless like this, may be easily written on any subject.

In his epilogues to Phædra and to Lucius he is very happily facetious; but in the prologue before the queen, the pedant has found his way, with Minerva, Persius, and Andromeda.

His epigrams and lighter pieces are, like those of

others, sometimes elegant, sometimes trifling, and sometimes dull; amongst the best are the Chamelion, and the epitaph on John and Joan.

Scarcely any one of our poets has written so much, and translated so little: the version of Callimachus is sufficiently licentious; the paraphrase on St. Paul's Exhortation to Charity is eminently beautiful.

Alma is written in professed imitation of Hudibras, and has, at least, one accidental resemblance: Hudibras wants a plan, because it is left imperfect; Alma is imperfect, because it seems never to have had a plan. Prior appears not to have proposed to himself any drift or design, but to have written the casual dictates of the present moment.

What Horace said when he imitated Lucilius, might be said of Butler by Prior; his numbers were not smooth or neat. Prior excelled him in versification; but he was like Horace, "inventore minor;" he had not Butler's exuberance of matter and variety of illustration. The spangles of wit which he could afford, he knew how to polish; but he wanted the bullion of his master. Butler pours out a negligent profusion, certain of the weight, but careless of the stamp. Prior has comparatively little, but with that little he makes a fine show. Alma has many admirers, and was the only piece among Prior's works of which Pope said that he should wish to be the author.

Solomon is the work to which he entrusted the protection of his name, and which he expected succeeding ages to regard with veneration. His affec-

tion was natural; it had undoubtedly been written with great labour; and who is willing to think that he has been labouring in vain ? He had infused into it much knowledge and much thought; had often polished it to elegance, often dignified it with splendour, and sometimes heightened it to sublimity: he perceived in it many excellencies, and did not discover that it wanted that without which all others are of small avail, the power of engaging attention and alluring curiosity.

Tediousness is the most fatal of all faults; negligences or errours are single and local, but tediousness pervades the whole; other faults are censured and forgotten, but the power of tediousness propagates itself. He that is weary the first hour, is more weary the second; as bodies forced into motion, contrary to their tendency, pass more and more slowly through every successive interval of space.

Unhappily this pernicious failure is that which an author is least able to discover. We are seldom tiresome to ourselves; and the act of composition fills and delights the mind with change of language and succession of images; every couplet, when produced, is new, and novelty is the great source of pleasure. Perhaps no man ever thought a line superfluous when he first wrote it, or contracted his work till his ebullitions of invention had subsided. And even if he should control his desire of immediate renown, and keep his work nine years unpublished, he will be still the author, and still in danger of deceiving himself: and if he consults his friends,

he will, probably, find men who have more kindness than judgment, or more fear to offend, than desire to instruct.

The tediousness of this poem proceeds not from the uniformity of the subject, for it is sufficiently diversified, but from the continued tenour of the narration; in which Solomon relates the successive vicissitudes of his own mind, without the intervention of any other speaker, or the mention of any other agent, unless it be Abra; the reader is only to learn what he thought, and to be told that he thought wrong. The event of every experiment is foreseen, and, therefore, the process is not much regarded.

Yet the work is far from deserving to be neglected. He that shall peruse it will be able to mark many passages, to which he may recur for instruction or delight; many from which the poet may learn to write, and the philosopher to reason.

If Prior's poetry be generally considered, his praise will be that of correctness and industry rather than of compass of comprehension, or activity of fancy. He never made any effort of invention: his greater pieces are only tissues of common thoughts; and his smaller, which consist of light images, or single conceits, are not always his own. I have traced him among the French epigrammatists, and have been informed that he poached for prey among obscure authors. The Thief and the Cordelier is, I suppose, generally considered as an original production; with how much justice this

epigram may tell, which was written by Georgius Sabinus, a poet now little known or read, though once the friend of Luther and Melancthon.

De Sacerdote Furem consolante.

Quidam sacrificus furem comitatus euntem
Huc ubi dat sontes carnificina neci,
Ne sis mœstus, ait; summi conviva Tonantis
Jam cum cœlitibus (si modo credis) eris.
Ille gemens, si vera mihi solatia præbes,
Hospes apud superos sis meus oro, refert.
Sacrificus contra; mihi non conviva fas est
Ducere, jejunans hac edo luce nihil.

What he has valuable he owes to his diligence and his judgment. His diligence has justly placed him amongst the most correct of the English poets; and he was one of the first that resolutely endeavoured at correctness. He never sacrifices accuracy to haste, nor indulges himself in contemptuous negligence, or impatient idleness; he has no careless lines, or entangled sentiments; his words are nicely selected, and his thoughts fully expanded. If this part of his character suffers any abatement, it must be from the disproportion of his rhymes, which have not always sufficient consonance, and from the admission of broken lines into his Solomon; but, perhaps, he thought, like Cowley, that hemistichs ought to be admitted into heroick poetry[y].

He had, apparently, such rectitude of judgment, as secured him from every thing that approached to the ridiculous or absurd; but as laws operate

[y] The same thought is found in one of Owen's epigrams, lib. i. epig. 123. and in Poggii Facetiæ. J. B.

in civil agency not to the excitement of virtue, but the repression of wickedness, so judgment in the operations of intellect can hinder faults, but not produce excellence. Prior is never low, nor very often sublime. It is said by Longinus of Euripides, that he forces himself sometimes into grandeur by violence of effort, as the lion kindles his fury by the lashes of his own tail. Whatever Prior obtains above mediocrity seems the effort of struggle and toil. He has many vigorous but few happy lines; he has every thing by purchase, and nothing by gift; he had no "nightly visitations" of the muse, no infusions of sentiment or felicities of fancy.

His diction, however, is more his own than that of any among the successors of Dryden; he borrows no lucky turns, or commodious modes of language, from his predecessors. His phrases are original, but they are sometimes harsh; as he inherited no elegancies, none has he bequeathed. His expression has every mark of laborious study; the line seldom seems to have been formed at once; the words did not come till they were called, and were then put by constraint into their places, where they do their duty, but do it sullenly. In his greater compositions there may be found more rigid stateliness than graceful dignity.

Of versification he was not negligent: what he received from Dryden he did not lose; neither did he increase the difficulty of writing by unnecessary severity, but uses triplets and alexandrines without scruple. In his preface to Solomon he proposes some

improvements by extending the sense from one couplet to another, with variety of pauses. This he has attempted, but without success; his interrupted lines are unpleasing, and his sense, as less distinct is less striking.

He has altered the stanza of Spenser, as a house is altered by building another in its place of a different form. With how little resemblance he has formed his new stanza to that of his master, these specimens will show:

SPENSER

She flying fast from heaven's hated face,
And from the world that her discover'd wide,
Fled to the wasteful wilderness apace,
From living eyes her open shame to hide,
And lurk'd in rocks and caves long unespy'd.
But that fair crew of knights, and Una fair,
Did in that castle afterwards abide,
To rest themselves, and weary powers repair,
Where store they found of all, that dainty was and rare.

PRIOR

To the close rock the frighted raven flies,
Soon as the rising eagle cuts the air:
The shaggy wolf unseen and trembling lies,
When the hoarse roar proclaims the lion near.
Ill-starr'd did we our forts and lines forsake,
To dare our British foes to open fight:
Our conquest we by stratagem should make;
Our triumph had been founded in our flight.
'Tis ours, by craft and by surprise to gain:
'Tis theirs, to meet in arms, and battle in the plain [z].

By this new structure of his lines he has avoided

[z] Prior was not the first inventor of this stanza; for excepting the alexandrine close, it is to be found in Churchyard's Worthies of Wales. See his introduction for Brecknockshire. J. B.

difficulties; nor am I sure that he has lost any of the power of pleasing; but he no longer imitates Spenser.

Some of his poems are written without regularity of measure; for, when he commenced poet, we had not recovered from our Pindarick infatuation; but he probably lived to be convinced, that the essence of verse is order and consonance.

His numbers are such as mere diligence may attain; they seldom offend the ear, and seldom sooth it; they commonly want airiness, lightness, and facility: what is smooth, is not soft. His verses always roll, but they seldom flow.

A survey of the life and writings of Prior may exemplify a sentence which he doubtless understood well, when he read Horace at his uncle's; "the vessel long retains the scent which it first receives." In his private relaxation he revived the tavern, and in his amorous pedantry he exhibited the college. But on higher occasions and nobler subjects, when habit was overpowered by the necessity of reflection, he wanted not wisdom as a statesman, nor elegance as a poet.

CONGREVE

WILLIAM CONGREVE descended from a family in Staffordshire, of so great antiquity that it claims a place among the few that extend their line beyond the Norman conquest; and was the son of William Congreve, second son of Richard Congreve, of Congreve and Stratton. He visited, once, at least, the residence of his ancestors; and, I believe, more places than one are still shown, in groves and gardens, where he is related to have written his Old Bachelor.

Neither the time nor place of his birth are certainly known: if the inscription upon his monument be true, he was born in 1672[a]. For the place; it was said by himself, that he owed his nativity to England, and by every body else that he was born in Ireland. Southern mentioned him with sharp censure, as a man that meanly disowned his native country. The biographers assign his nativity to Bardsa, near Leeds, in Yorkshire, from the account given by himself, as they suppose, to Jacob.

To doubt whether a man of eminence has told the truth about his own birth, is, in appearance, to be very deficient in candour; yet nobody can live long without knowing that falsehoods of convenience or vanity, falsehoods from which no evil immediately visible ensues, except the general degradation of human testimony, are very lightly uttered, and once

[a] Mr. Malone has ascertained both the place and time of his birth by the register of Bardsey, which is as follows: "William the sonne of Mr. William Congreve of Bardsey Grange, was baptised Febru. 10th, 1699." See Malone's Dryden, vol. i. p.225. J. B.

uttered are sullenly supported. Boileau, who desired to be thought a rigorous and steady moralist, having told a petty lie to Lewis the fourteenth, continued it afterwards by false dates; thinking himself obliged, *in honour*, says his admirer, to maintain what, when he said it, was so well received.

Wherever Congreve was born, he was educated first at Kilkenny, and afterwards at Dublin, his father having some military employment that stationed him in Ireland: but, after having passed through the usual preparatory studies, as may be reasonably supposed, with great celerity and success, his father thought it proper to assign him a profession, by which something might be gotten; and, about the time of the revolution, sent him, at the age of sixteen, to study law in the Middle Temple, where he lived for several years, but with very little attention to statutes or reports.

His disposition to become an author appeared very early, as he very early felt that force of imagination, and possessed that copiousness of sentiment, by which intellectual pleasure can be given. His first performance was a novel, called Incognita, or Love and Duty reconciled: it is praised by the biographers, who quote some part of the preface, that is indeed, for such a time of life, uncommonly judicious. I would rather praise it than read it.

His first dramatick labour was the Old Bachelor; of which he says, in his defence against Collier, "that comedy was written, as several know, some years before it was acted. When I wrote it, I had little

thoughts of the stage; but did it, to amuse myself in a slow recovery from a fit of sickness. Afterwards, through my indiscretion, it was seen, and in some little time more it was acted; and I, through the remainder of my indiscretion, suffered myself to be drawn into the prosecution of a difficult and thankless study, and to be involved in a perpetual war with knaves and fools."

There seems to be a strange affectation in authors of appearing to have done every thing by chance. The Old Bachelor was written for amusement, in the languor of convalescence. Yet it is apparently composed with great elaborateness of dialogue, and incessant ambition of wit. The age of the writer considered, it is, indeed, a very wonderful performance; for, whenever written, it was acted, 1693, when he was not more than twenty-one years old; and was then recommended by Mr. Dryden, Mr. Southern, and Mr. Maynwaring. Dryden said, that he never had seen such a first play; but they found it deficient in some things requisite to the success of its exhibition, and by their greater experience fitted it for the stage. Southern used to relate of one comedy, probably of this, that, when Congreve read it to the players, he pronounced it so wretchedly that they had almost rejected it; but they were afterwards so well persuaded of its excellence, that, for half a year before it was acted, the manager allowed its author the privilege of the house.

Few plays have ever been so beneficial to the writer; for it procured him the patronage of Hali-

fax, who immediately made him one of the commissioners for licensing coaches, and soon after gave him a place in the pipe-office, and another in the customs, of six hundred pounds a year. Congreve's conversation must surely have been, at least, equally pleasing with his writings.

Such a comedy, written at such an age, requires some consideration. As the lighter species of dramatick poetry professes the imitation of common life, of real manners, and daily incidents, it apparently presupposes a familiar knowledge of many characters, and exact observation of the passing world; the difficulty, therefore, is to conceive how this knowledge can be obtained by a boy.

But if the Old Bachelor be more nearly examined, it will be found to be one of those comedies which may be made by a mind vigorous and acute, and furnished with comick characters by the perusal of other poets, without much actual commerce with mankind. The dialogue is one constant reciprocation of conceits, or clash of wit, in which nothing flows necessarily from the occasion, or is dictated by nature. The characters, both of men and women, are either fictitious and artificial, as those of Heartwell, and the ladies; or easy and common, as Wittol, a tame idiot; Bluff, a swaggering coward; and Fondlewife, a jealous puritan; and the catastrophe arises from a mistake not very probably produced, by marrying a woman in a mask.

Yet this gay comedy, when all these deductions are made, will still remain the work of very power-

ful and fertile faculties; the dialogue is quick and sparkling, the incidents such as seize the attention, and the wit so exuberant, that it "o'er-informs its tenement."

Next year he gave another specimen of his abilities in the Double Dealer, which was not received with equal kindness. He writes to his patron, the lord Halifax, a dedication, in which he endeavours to reconcile the reader to that which found few friends among the audience. These apologies are always useless: "de gustibus non est disputandum;" men may be convinced, but they cannot be pleased, against their will. But, though taste is obstinate, it is very variable; and time often prevails when arguments have failed.

Queen Mary conferred upon both those plays the honour of her presence; and when she died, soon after, Congreve testified his gratitude by a despicable effusion of elegiack pastoral; a composition in which all is unnatural, and yet nothing is new.

In another year, 1695, his prolifick pen produced Love for Love; a comedy of nearer alliance to life, and exhibiting more real manners than either of the former. The character of Foresight was then common. Dryden calculated nativities; both Cromwell and king William had their lucky days; and Shaftesbury himself, though he had no religion, was said to regard predictions. The Sailor is not accounted very natural, but he is very pleasant.

With this play was opened the new theatre, under the direction of Betterton the tragedian; where he

exhibited, two years afterwards, 1697, the Mourning Bride, a tragedy, so written as to show him sufficiently qualified for either kind of dramatick poetry.

In this play, of which, when he afterwards revised it, he reduced the versification to greater regularity, there is more bustle than sentiment; the plot is busy and intricate, and the events take hold on the attention; but, except a very few passages, we are rather amused with noise, and perplexed with stratagem, than entertained with any true delineation of natural characters. This, however, was received with more benevolence than any other of his works, and still continues to be acted and applauded.

But whatever objections may be made, either to his comick or tragick excellence, they are lost, at once, in the blaze of admiration, when it is remembered that he had produced these four plays before he had passed his twenty-fifth year; before other men, even such as are some time to shine in eminence, have passed their probation of literature, or presume to hope for any other notice than such as is bestowed on diligence and inquiry. Among all the efforts of early genius which literary history records, I doubt whether any one can be produced that more surpasses the common limits of nature than the plays of Congreve.

About this time began the long-continued controversy between Collier and the poets. In the reign of Charles the first the puritans had raised a violent clamour against the drama, which they considered as an entertainment not lawful to christians, an

opinion held by them in common with the church of Rome; and Prynne published Histriomastix, a huge volume, in which stageplays were censured. The outrages and crimes of the puritans brought afterwards their whole system of doctrine into disrepute, and from the restoration the poets and the players were left at quiet; for to have molested them would have had the appearance of tendency to puritanical malignity.

This danger, however, was worn away by time; and Collier, a fierce and implacable nonjuror, knew that an attack upon the theatre would never make him suspected for a puritan; he, therefore, 1698, published a short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, I believe with no other motive than religious zeal and honest indignation. He was formed for a controvertist; with sufficient learning; with diction vehement and pointed, though often vulgar and incorrect; with unconquerable pertinacity; with wit, in the highest degree, keen and sarcastick; and with all those powers exalted and invigorated by just confidence in his cause.

Thus qualified, and thus incited, he walked out to battle, and assailed, at once, most of the living writers, from Dryden to d'Urfey. His onset was violent: those passages, which while they stood single had passed with little notice, when they were accumulated and exposed together, excited horrour; the wise and the pious caught the alarm; and the nation wondered why it had so long suffered irreli-

gion and licentiousness to be openly taught at the publick charge.

Nothing now remained for the poets but to resist or fly. Dryden's conscience, or his prudence, angry as he was, withheld him from the conflict; Congreve and Vanbrugh attempted answers. Congreve, a very young man, elated with success, and impatient of censure, assumed an air of confidence and security. His chief artifice of controversy is to retort upon his adversary his own words: he is very angry, and, hoping to conquer Collier with his own weapons, allows himself in the use of every term of contumely and contempt; but he has the sword without the arm of Scanderbeg; he has his antagonist's coarseness, but not his strength. Collier replied; for contest was his delight: he was not to be frighted from his purpose or his prey.

The cause of Congreve was not tenable: whatever glosses he might use for the defence or palliation of single passages, the general tenour and tendency of his plays must always be condemned. It is acknowledged, with universal conviction, that the perusal of his works will make no man better; and that their ultimate effect is to represent pleasure in alliance with vice, and to relax those obligations by which life ought to be regulated.

The stage found other advocates, and the dispute was protracted through ten years; but, at last, comedy grew more modest, and Collier lived to see the reward of his labour in the reformation of the theatre.

Of the powers by which this important victory was achieved, a quotation from Love for Love, and the remark upon it, may afford a specimen:

Sir Samps. "Sampson's a very good name; for your Sampsons were strong dogs from the beginning."

Angel. "Have a care — If you remember, the strongest Sampson of your name pull'd an old house over his head at last."

"Here you have the sacred history burlesqued; and Sampson once more brought into the house of Dagon, to make sport for the Philistines!"

Congreve's last play was the Way of the World; which, though as he hints in his dedication it was written with great labour and much thought, was received with so little favour, that, being in a high degree offended and disgusted, he resolved to commit his quiet and his fame no more to the caprices of an audience.

From this time his life ceased to be publick; he lived for himself and for his friends; and, among his friends, was able to name every man of his time whom wit and elegance had raised to reputation. It may be, therefore, reasonably supposed that his manners were polite, and his conversation pleasing.

He seems not to have taken much pleasure in writing, as he contributed nothing to the Spectator, and only one paper to the Tatler, though published by men with whom he might be supposed willing to associate; and though he lived many years after the publication of his Miscellaneous Poems, yet he

added nothing to them, but lived on in literary indolence; engaged in no controversy, contending with no rival, neither soliciting flattery by publick commendations, nor provoking enmity by malignant criticism, but passing his time among the great and splendid, in the placid enjoyment of his fame and fortune.

Having owed his fortune to Halifax, he continued always of his patron's party, but, as it seems, without violence or acrimony; and his firmness was naturally esteemed, as his abilities were reverenced. His security, therefore, was never violated; and when, upon the extrusion of the whigs, some intercession was used lest Congreve should be displaced, the earl of Oxford made this answer:

> "Non obtusa adeo gestamus pectora Pœni,
> Nec tama versus equos Tyria sol jungit ab urbe."

He that was thus honoured by the adverse party might naturally expect to be advanced when his friends returned to power; and he was, accordingly, made secretary for the island of Jamaica[b], a place, I suppose, without trust or care, but which, with his post in the customs, is said to have afforded him twelve hundred pounds a year.

His honours were yet far greater than his profits. Every writer mentioned him with respect; and, among other testimonies to his merit, Steele made him the patron of his Miscellany, and Pope inscribed to him his translation of the Iliad.

[b] Dec. 17, 1714, and May 3, 1718, he received a patent for the same place for life.

But he treated the muses with ingratitude; for, having long conversed familiarly with the great, he wished to be considered rather as a man of fashion than of wit; and, when he received a visit from Voltaire, disgusted him by the despicable foppery of desiring to be considered not as an author but a gentleman; to which the Frenchman replied, "that if he had been only a gentleman, he should not have come to visit him."

In his retirement he may be supposed to have applied himself to books; for he discovers more literature than the poets have commonly attained. But his studies were, in his latter days, obstructed by cataracts in his eyes, which, at last, terminated in blindness. This melancholy state was aggravated by the gout, for which he sought relief by a journey to Bath; but, being overturned in his chariot, complained from that time of a pain in his side, and died, at his house in Surrey-street, in the Strand, Jan. 29[c], 1728–9. Having lain in state in the Jerusalem-chamber, he was buried in Westminster Abbey, where a monument is erected to his memory by Henrietta, dutchess of Marlborough, to whom, for reasons either not known or not mentioned, he bequeathed a legacy of about ten thousand pounds; the accumulation of attentive parsimony, which, though to her superfluous and useless, might have given great assistance to the ancient family from which he descended, at that time, by the imprudence of his relation, reduced to difficulties and distress.

[c] The Historical Register says Jan. 19. æt. 57.

Congreve has merit of the highest kind; he is an original writer, who borrowed neither the models of his plot nor the manner of his dialogue. Of his plays I cannot speak distinctly; for, since I inspected them many years have passed; but what remains upon my memory is, that his characters are commonly fictitious and artificial, with very little of nature, and not much of life. He formed a peculiar idea of comick excellence, which he supposed to consist in gay remarks and unexpected answers; but that which he endeavoured, he seldom failed of performing. His scenes exhibit not much of humour, imagery, or passion: his personages are a kind of intellectual gladiators; every sentence is to ward or strike; the contest of smartness is never intermitted; his wit is a meteor playing to and fro with alternate coruscations. His comedies have, therefore, in some degree, the operation of tragedies; they surprise rather than divert, and raise admiration oftener than merriment. But they are the works of a mind replete with images, and quick in combination.

Of his miscellaneous poetry I cannot say any thing very favourable. The powers of Congreve seem to desert him when he leaves the stage, as Antæus was no longer strong than when he could touch the ground. It cannot be observed without wonder, that a mind so vigorous and fertile in dramatick compositions should, on any other occasion, discover nothing but impotence and poverty. He has, in these little pieces, neither elevation of fancy, selection of language, nor skill in versification: yet, if I were re-

quired to select from the whole mass of English poetry the most poetical paragraph, I know not what I could prefer to an exclamation in the Mourning Bride:

ALMERIA

It was a fancy'd noise; for all is hush'd.

LEONORA

It bore the accent of a human voice.

ALMERIA

It was thy fear, or else some transient wind
Whistling thro' hollows of this vaulted isle:
We'll listen —

LEONORA

Hark!

ALMERIA

No, all is hush'd and still as death. —'Tis dreadful!
How reverend is the face of this tall pile;
Whose ancient pillars rear their marble heads,
To bear aloft its arch'd and ponderous roof,
By its own weight made stedfast and immoveable,
Looking tranquillity! It strikes an awe
And terror on my aching sight; the tombs
And monumental caves of death look cold,
And shoot a chilness to my trembling heart.
Give me thy hand, and let me hear thy voice;
Nay, quickly speak to me, and let me hear
Thy voice — my own affrights me with its echoes.

He who reads these lines enjoys, for a moment, the powers of a poet; he feels what he remembers to have felt before, but he feels it with great increase of sensibility; he recognises a familiar image, but meets it again amplified and expanded, embellished with beauty, and enlarged with majesty.

Yet could the author, who appears here to have enjoyed the confidence of nature, lament the death of queen Mary in lines like these:

The rocks are cleft, and new-descending rills
Furrow the brows of all th' impending hills.

The water-gods to floods their rivulets turn,
And each, with streaming eyes, supplies his wanting urn.
The fauns forsake the woods, the nymphs the grove,
And round the plain in sad distractions rove:
In prickly brakes their tender limbs they tear,
And leave on thorns their locks of golden hair.
With their sharp nails, themselves the satyrs wound,
And tug their shaggy beards, and bite with grief the ground.
Lo Pan himself, beneath a blasted oak,
Dejected lies, his pipe in pieces broke.
See Pales weeping too, in wild despair,
And to the piercing winds her bosom bare.
And see yon fading myrtle, where appears
The queen of love, all bath'd in flowing tears;
See how she wrings her hands, and beats her breast,
And tears her useless girdle from her waist!
Hear the sad murmurs of her sighing doves!
For grief they sigh, forgetful of their loves.

And, many years after, he gave no proof that time had improved his wisdom or his wit; for, on the death of the marquis of Blandford, this was his song:

And now the winds, which had so long been still,
Began the swelling air with sighs to fill:
The water-nymphs, who motionless remain'd,
Like images of ice, while she complain'd,
Now loos'd their streams; as when descending rains
Roll the steep torrents headlong o'er the plains.
The prone creation, who so long had gaz'd,
Charm'd with her cries, and at her griefs amaz'd,
Began to roar and howl with horrid yell,
Dismal to hear and terrible to tell!
Nothing but groans and sighs were heard around,
And echo multiplied each mournful sound.

In both these funeral poems, when he has *yelled* out many *syllables* of senseless *dolour*, he dismisses his reader with senseless consolation: from the grave of Pastora rises a light that forms a star; and where

Amaryllis wept for Amyntas, from every tear sprung up a violet.

But William is his hero, and of William he will sing:

> The hov'ring wind on downy wings shall wait around,
> And catch, and waft to foreign lands, the flying sound.

It cannot but be proper to show what they shall have to catch and carry:

> 'Twas now, when flow'ry lawns the prospect made,
> And flowing brooks beneath a forest shade,
> A lowing heifer, loveliest of the herd,
> Stood feeding by; while two fierce bulls prepar'd
> Their armed heads for fight, by fate of war to prove
> The victor worthy of the fair one's love.
> Unthought presage of what met next my view;
> For soon the shady scene withdrew.
> And now, for woods, and fields, and springing flowers,
> Behold a town arise, bulwark'd with walls and lofty towers;
> Two rival armies all the plain o'erspread,
> Each in battalia rang'd, and shining arms array'd;
> With eager eyes beholding both from far
> Namur, the prize and mistress of the war.

The Birth of the Muse is a miserable fiction. One good line it has, which was borrowed from Dryden. The concluding verses are these:

> This said, no more remain'd. Th' ethereal host
> Again impatient crowd the crystal coast.
> The father now, within his spacious hands,
> Encompass'd all the mingled mass of seas and lands;
> And, having heav'd aloft the pond'rous sphere,
> He launch'd the world to float in ambient air.

Of his irregular poems, that to Mrs. Arabella Hunt seems to be the best; his ode for St. Cecilia's Day, however, has some lines which Pope had in his mind when he wrote his own.

His imitations of Horace are feebly paraphrastical, and the additions which he makes are of little value. He sometimes retains what were more properly omitted, as when he talks of *vervain* and *gums* to propitiate Venus.

Of his translations, the satire of Juvenal was written very early, and may, therefore, be forgiven, though it have not the massiness and vigour of the original. In all his versions strength and sprightliness are wanting: his hymn to Venus, from Homer, is, perhaps, the best. His lines are weakened with expletives, and his rhymes are frequently imperfect.

His petty poems are seldom worth the cost of criticism: sometimes the thoughts are false, and sometimes common. In his verses on lady Gethin, the latter part is in imitation of Dryden's ode on Mrs. Killigrew; and Doris, that has been so lavishly flattered by Steele, has, indeed, some lively stanzas, but the expression might be mended; and the most striking part of the character had been already shown in Love for Love. His Art of Pleasing is founded on a vulgar, but, perhaps, impracticable principle, and the staleness of the sense is not concealed by any novelty of illustration or elegance of diction.

This tissue of poetry, from which he seems to have hoped a lasting name, is totally neglected, and known only as it is appended to his plays.

While comedy, or while tragedy, is regarded, his plays are likely to be read; but, except what relates

to the stage[d], I know not that he has written a stanza that is sung, or a couplet that is quoted. The general character of his Miscellanies is, that they show little wit, and little virtue.

Yet to him it must be confessed, that we are indebted for the correction of a national errour, and for the cure of our Pindarick madness. He first taught the English writers that Pindar's odes were regular; and though certainly he had not the fire requisite for the higher species of lyrick poetry, he has shown us, that enthusiasm has its rules, and that, in mere confusion, there is neither grace nor greatness.

[d] "Except!" Dr. Warton exclaims, "Is not this a high sort of poetry?" He mentions, likewise, that Congreve's opera, or oratorio, of Semele, was set to musick by Handel; I believe, in 1743.

BLACKMORE

SIR RICHARD BLACKMORE is one of those men whose writings have attracted much notice, but of whose life and manners very little has been communicated, and whose lot it has been to be much oftener mentioned by enemies than by friends.

He was the son of Robert Blackmore, of Corsham, in Wiltshire, styled, by Wood, gentleman, and supposed to have been an attorney. Having been, for some time, educated in a country school, he was sent, at thirteen, to Westminster; and, in 1668, was entered at Edmund hall, in Oxford, where he took the degree of M. A. June 3, 1676, and resided thirteen years; a much longer time than it is usual to spend at the university; and which he seems to have passed with very little attention to the business of the place; for, in his poems, the ancient names of nations or places, which he often introduces, are pronounced by chance. He afterwards travelled: at Padua he was made doctor of physick; and, after having wandered about a year and a half on the continent, returned home.

In some part of his life, it is not known when, his indigence compelled him to teach a school; an humiliation, with which, though it certainly lasted but a little while, his enemies did not forget to reproach him, when he became conspicuous enough to excite malevolence; and let it be remembered, for his honour, that to have once been a school-master is the only reproach which all the perspicacity

of malice, animated by wit, has ever fixed upon his private life.

When he first engaged in the study of physick, he inquired, as he says, of Dr. Sydenham, what authors he should read, and was directed by Sydenham to Don Quixote; "which," said he, "is a very good book; I read it still." The perverseness of mankind makes it often mischievous in men of eminence to give way to merriment; the idle and the illiterate will long shelter themselves under this foolish apophthegm.

Whether he rested satisfied with this direction, or sought for better, he commenced physician, and obtained high eminence and extensive practice. He became fellow of the College of Physicians, April 12, 1687, being one of the thirty, which, by the new charter of king James, were added to the former fellows. His residence was in Cheapside[e], and his friends were chiefly in the city. In the early part of Blackmore's time, a citizen was a term of reproach; and his place of abode was another topick to which his adversaries had recourse, in the penury of scandal.

Blackmore, therefore, was made a poet not by necessity but inclination, and wrote not for a livelihood but for fame; or, if he may tell his own motives, for a nobler purpose, to engage poetry in the cause of virtue.

I believe it is peculiar to him, that his first publick work was an heroick poem. He was not known as a maker of verses till he published, in 1695, Prince

[e] At Saddlers' hall.

Arthur, in ten books, written, as he relates, "by such catches and starts, and in such occasional uncertain hours, as his profession afforded, and for the greatest part in coffee-houses, or in passing up and down the streets." For the latter part of this apology he was accused of writing "to the rumbling of his chariot-wheels." He had read, he says, "but little poetry throughout his whole life; and for fifteen years before had not written an hundred verses, except one copy of Latin verses in praise of a friend's book[f]."

He thinks, and with some reason, that from such a performance perfection cannot be expected; but he finds another reason for the severity of his censurers, which he expresses in language such as Cheapside easily furnished. "I am not free of the poets' company, having never kissed the governor's hands: mine is, therefore, not so much as a permission poem, but a downright interloper. Those gentlemen who carry on their poetical trade in a joint stock, would, certainly, do what they could to sink and ruin an unlicensed adventurer, notwithstanding I disturbed none of their factories, nor imported any goods they had ever dealt in." He had lived in the city till he had learned its note.

That Prince Arthur found many readers is certain; for in two years it had three editions; a very uncommon instance of favourable reception, at a time when literary curiosity was yet confined to particu-

[f] The book he alludes to was Nova Hypothesis ad explicanda febrium intermittentium symptomata, &c. Authore Gulielmo Cole, M. D. 1693.

lar classes of the nation. Such success naturally raised animosity; and Dennis attacked it by a formal criticism, more tedious and disgusting than the work which he condemns. To this censure may be opposed the approbation of Locke and the admiration of Molineux, which are found in their printed letters. Molineux is particularly delighted with the song of Mopas, which is, therefore, subjoined to this narrative.

It is remarked by Pope, that what "raises the hero, often sinks the man." Of Blackmore it may be said, that, as the poet sinks, the man rises; the animadversions of Dennis, insolent and contemptuous as they were, raised in him no implacable resentment: he and his critick were afterwards friends; and in one of his latter works he praises Dennis as "equal to Boileau in poetry, and superior to him in critical abilities."

He seems to have been more delighted with praise than pained by censure, and, instead of slackening, quickened his career. Having in two years produced ten books of Prince Arthur, in two years more, 1697, he sent into the world King Arthur, in twelve. The provocation was now doubled, and the resentment of wits and criticks may be supposed to have increased in proportion. He found, however, advantages more than equivalent to all their outrages; he was this year made one of the physicians in ordinary to king William, and advanced by him to the honour of knighthood, with the present of a gold chain and a medal.

The malignity of the wits attributed his knighthood to his new poem; but king William was not very studious of poetry; and Blackmore, perhaps, had other merit; for he says, in his dedication to Alfred, that "he had a greater part in the succession of the house of Hanover than ever he had boasted."

What Blackmore could contribute to the succession, or what he imagined himself to have contributed, cannot now be known. That he had been of considerable use, I doubt not but he believed, for I hold him to have been very honest; but he might easily make a false estimate of his own importance: those whom their virtue restrains from deceiving others, are often disposed, by their vanity, to deceive themselves. Whether he promoted the succession or not, he at least approved it, and adhered invariably to his principles and party through his whole life.

His ardour of poetry still continued; and not long after, 1700, he published a Paraphrase on the book of Job, and other parts of the scripture. This performance Dryden, who pursued him with great malignity, lived long enough to ridicule in a prologue.

The wits easily confederated against him, as Dryden, whose favour they almost all courted, was his professed adversary. He had besides given them reason for resentment, as, in his preface to Prince Arthur, he had said of the dramatick writers almost all that was alleged afterwards by Collier; but

Blackmore's censure was cold and general, Collier's was personal and ardent; Blackmore taught his reader to dislike, what Collier incited him to abhor.

In his preface to King Arthur he endeavoured to gain, at least, one friend, and propitiated Congreve by higher praise of his Mourning Bride than it has obtained from any other critick.

The same year he published a Satire on Wit, a proclamation of defiance which united the poets almost all against him, and which brought upon him lampoons and ridicule from every side. This he doubtless foresaw, and evidently despised; nor should his dignity of mind be without its praise, had he not paid the homage to greatness which he denied to genius, and degraded himself by conferring that authority over the national taste, which he takes from the poets, upon men of high rank and wide influence, but of less wit, and not greater virtue.

Here is again discovered the inhabitant of Cheapside, whose head cannot keep his poetry unmingled with trade. To hinder that intellectual bankruptcy which he affects to fear, he will erect a *bank for wit.*

In this poem he justly censured Dryden's impurities, but praised his powers; though, in a subsequent edition, he retained the satire, and omitted the praise. What was his reason I know not; Dryden was then no longer in his way.

His head still teemed with heroick poetry; and, 1705, he published Eliza, in ten books. I am afraid that the world was now weary of contending about

Blackmore's heroes; for I do not remember that by any author, serious or comical, I have found Eliza either praised or blamed. She "dropped," as it seems, "dead-born from the press." It is never mentioned, and was never seen by me till I borrowed it for the present occasion. Jacob says, "it is corrected and revised for another impression;" but the labour of revision was thrown away.

From this time he turned some of his thoughts to the celebration of living characters; and wrote a poem on the Kit-cat Club[g], and Advice to the Poets how to celebrate the Duke of Marlborough; but, on occasion of another year of success, thinking himself qualified to give more instruction, he again wrote a poem of Advice to a Weaver of Tapestry. Steele was then publishing the Tatler; and, looking round him for something at which he might laugh, unluckily lighted on sir Richard's work, and treated it with such contempt, that, as Fenton observes, he put an end to the species of writers that gave *advice to painters.*

Not long after, 1712, he published Creation, a philosophical poem, which has been, by my recommendation, inserted in the late collection. Whoever judges of this by any other of Blackmore's performances, will do it injury. The praise given it by Addison, Spectator, 339, is too well known to be

[g] "The Kit-cat Club," says Horace Walpole, "though generally mentioned as a set of wits, were, in fact, the patriots who saved Britain." See, for the history of its origin and name, Addisonia, i. 120; Ward's complete and humorous account of the remarkable Clubs and Societies. Ed.

transcribed; but some notice is due to the testimony of Dennis, who calls it a "philosophical poem, which has equalled that of Lucretius in the beauty of its versification, and infinitely surpassed it in the solidity and strength of its reasoning."

Why an author surpasses himself, it is natural to inquire. I have heard from Mr. Draper, an eminent bookseller, an account received by him from Ambrose Philips, "That Blackmore, as he proceeded in his poem, laid his manuscript, from time to time, before a club of wits with whom he associated; and that every man contributed, as he could, either improvement or correction; so that," said Philips, "there are, perhaps, nowhere in the book thirty lines together that now stand as they were originally written."

The relation of Philips, I suppose, was true; but when all reasonable, all credible allowance is made for this friendly revision, the author will still retain an ample dividend of praise; for to him must always be assigned the plan of the work, the distribution of its parts, the choice of topicks, the train of argument, and, what is yet more, the general predominance of philosophical judgment and poetical spirit. Correction seldom effects more than the suppression of faults: a happy line, or a single elegance, may, perhaps, be added; but, of a large work, the general character must always remain; the original constitution can be very little helped by local remedies; inherent and radical dulness will never be much invigorated by extrinsick animation.

This poem, if he had written nothing else, would have transmitted him to posterity among the first favourites of the English muse; but to make verses was his transcendent pleasure, and, as he was not deterred by censure, he was not satiated with praise.

He deviated, however, sometimes into other tracks of literature, and condescended to entertain his readers with plain prose. When the Spectator stopped, he considered the polite world as destitute of entertainment; and, in concert with Mr. Hughes, who wrote every third paper, published, three times a week, the Lay Monastery, founded on the supposition that some literary men, whose characters are described, had retired to a house in the country to enjoy philosophical leisure, and resolved to instruct the publick, by communicating their disquisitions and amusements. Whether any real persons were concealed under fictitious names, is not known. The hero of the club is one Mr. Johnson; such a constellation of excellence, that his character shall not be suppressed, though there is no great genius in the design, nor skill in the delineation.

"The first I shall name is Mr. Johnson, a gentleman that owes to nature excellent faculties and an elevated genius, and to industry and application many acquired accomplishments. His taste is distinguishing, just, and delicate: his judgment clear, and his reason strong, accompanied with an imagination full of spirit, of great compass, and stored with refined ideas. He is a critick of the first rank;

and, what is his peculiar ornament, he is delivered from the ostentation, malevolence, and supercilious temper, that so often blemish men of that character. His remarks result from the nature and reason of things, and are formed by a judgment free, and unbiassed by the authority of those who have lazily followed each other in the same beaten track of thinking, and are arrived only at the reputation of acute grammarians and commentators; men, who have been copying one another many hundred years, without any improvement; or, if they have ventured farther, have only applied in a mechanical manner the rules of ancient criticks to modern writings, and, with great labour, discovered nothing but their own want of judgment and capacity. As Mr. Johnson penetrates to the bottom of his subject, by which means his observations are solid and natural, as well as delicate, so his design is always to bring to light something useful and ornamental; whence his character is the reverse to theirs, who have eminent abilities in insignificant knowledge, and a great felicity in finding out trifles. He is no less industrious to search out the merit of an author, than sagacious in discerning his errors and defects; and takes more pleasure in commending the beauties, than exposing the blemishes of a laudable writing; like Horace, in a long work, he can bear some deformities, and justly lay them on the imperfection of human nature, which is incapable of faultless productions. When an excellent drama appears in publick, and by its intrinsick worth attracts a general

applause, he is not stung with envy and spleen; nor does he express a savage nature, in fastening upon the celebrated author, dwelling upon his imaginary defects, and passing over his conspicuous excellencies. He treats all writers upon the same impartial footing; and is not, like the little criticks, taken up entirely in finding out only the beauties of the ancient, and nothing but the errors of the modern writers. Never did any one express more kindness and good-nature to young and unfinished authors; he promotes their interests, protects their reputation, extenuates their faults, and sets off their virtues, and, by his candour, guards them from the severity of his judgment. He is not like those dry criticks, who are morose because they cannot write themselves, but is himself master of a good vein in poetry; and though he does not often employ it, yet he has sometimes entertained his friends with his unpublished performances."

The rest of the lay monks seem to be but feeble mortals, in comparison with the gigantick Johnson; who yet, with all his abilities, and the help of the fraternity, could drive the publication but to forty papers, which were afterwards collected into a volume, and called, in the title, a Sequel to the Spectators.

Some years afterwards, 1716 and 1717, he published two volumes of essays in prose, which can be commended only as they are written for the highest and noblest purpose, the promotion of religion. Blackmore's prose is not the prose of a poet; for it is languid, sluggish, and lifeless; his diction is neither

daring nor exact, his flow neither rapid nor easy, and his periods neither smooth nor strong. His account of wit, will show with how little clearness he is content to think, and how little his thoughts are recommended by his language.

"As to its efficient cause, wit owes its production to an extraordinary and peculiar temperament in the constitution of the possessor of it, in which is found a concurrence of regular and exalted ferments, and an affluence of animal spirits, refined and rectified to a great degree of purity; whence, being endowed with vivacity, brightness, and celerity, as well in their reflections as direct motions, they become proper instruments for the sprightly operations of the mind; by which means the imagination can, with great facility, range the wide field of nature, contemplate an infinite variety of objects, and, by observing the similitude and disagreement of their several qualities, single out and abstract, and then suit and unite, those ideas which will best serve its purpose. Hence beautiful allusions, surprising metaphors, and admirable sentiments, are always ready at hand: and while the fancy is full of images, collected from innumerable objects and their different qualities, relations, and habitudes, it can at pleasure dress a common notion in a strange but becoming garb; by which, as before observed, the same thought will appear a new one, to the great delight and wonder of the hearer. What we call *genius* results from this particular happy complexion in the first formation of the person that en-

joys it, and is nature's gift, but diversified by various specifick characters and limitations, as its active fire is blended and allayed by different proportions of phlegm, or reduced and regulated by the contrast of opposite ferments. Therefore, as there happens in the composition of a facetious genius a greater or less, though still an inferior degree of judgment and prudence, one man of wit will be varied and distinguished from another."

In these essays he took little care to propitiate the wits; for he scorns to avert their malice at the expense of virtue or of truth.

"Several, in their books, have many sarcastical and spiteful strokes at religion in general; while others make themselves pleasant with the principles of the christian. Of the last kind, this age has seen a most audacious example in the book entitled, a Tale of a Tub. Had this writing been published in a pagan or popish nation, who are justly impatient of all indignity offered to the established religion of their country, no doubt but the author would have received the punishment he deserved. But the fate of this impious buffoon is very different; for in a protestant kingdom, zealous of their civil and religious immunities, he has not only escaped affronts, and the effects of publick resentment, but has been caressed and patronised by persons of great figure, and of all denominations. Violent party-men, who differed in all things besides, agreed in their turn to show particular respect and friendship to this insolent derider of the worship of his country, till at

last the reputed writer is not only gone off with impunity, but triumphs in his dignity and preferment. I do not know that any inquiry or search was ever made after this writing, or that any reward was ever offered for the discovery of the author, or that the infamous book was ever condemned to be burnt in publick; whether this proceeds from the excessive esteem and love that men in power, during the late reign, had for wit, or their defect of zeal and concern for the christian religion, will be determined best by those who are best acquainted with their character."

In another place he speaks with becoming abhorrence of a "godless author," who has burlesqued a psalm. This author was supposed to be Pope, who published a reward for any one that would produce the coiner of the accusation, but never denied it; and was afterwards the perpetual and incessant enemy of Blackmore.

One of his essays is upon the Spleen, which is treated by him so much to his own satisfaction, that he has published the same thoughts in the same words; first in the Lay Monastery; then in the Essay; and then in the preface to a Medical Treatise on the Spleen. One passage, which I have found already twice, I will here exhibit, because I think it better imagined, and better expressed, than could be expected from the common tenour of his prose:

"As the several combinations of splenetick madness and folly produce an infinite variety of irregular understanding, so the amicable accommodation and alliance between several virtues and vices produce

an equal diversity in the dispositions and manners of mankind; whence it comes to pass, that as many monstrous and absurd productions are found in the moral, as in the intellectual world. How surprising is it to observe, among the least culpable men, some whose minds are attracted by heaven and earth, with a seeming equal force; some who are proud of humility; others who are censorious and uncharitable, yet self-denying and devout; some who join contempt of the world with sordid avarice; and others who preserve a great degree of piety, with ill-nature and ungoverned passions! Nor are instances of this inconsistent mixture less frequent among bad men, where we often, with admiration, see persons at once generous and unjust, impious lovers of their country, and flagitious heroes, good-natured sharpers, immoral men of honour, and libertines who will sooner die than change their religion; and though it is true that repugnant coalitions of so high a degree are found but in a part of mankind, yet none of the whole mass, either good or bad, are entirely exempted from some absurd mixture."

He, about this time, Aug. 22, 1716, became one of the elects of the College of Physicians; and was soon after, Oct. 1, chosen censor. He seems to have arrived late, whatever was the reason, at his medical honours.

Having succeeded so well in his book on Creation, by which he established the great principle of all religion, he thought his undertaking imperfect, unless he, likewise, enforced the truth of revelation;

and, for that purpose, added another poem on Redemption. He had, likewise, written, before his Creation, three books on the Nature of Man.

The lovers of musical devotion have always wished for a more happy metrical version than they have yet obtained of the Book of Psalms: this wish the piety of Blackmore led him to gratify; and he produced, 1721, a new version of the psalms of David, fitted to the tunes used in churches; which, being recommended by the archbishops and many bishops, obtained a license for its admission into publick worship: but no admission has it yet obtained, nor has it any right to come where Brady and Tate have got possession. Blackmore's name must be added to those of many others, who, by the same attempt, have obtained only the praise of meaning well.

He was not yet deterred from heroick poetry. There was another monarch of this island, for he did not fetch his heroes from foreign countries, whom he considered as worthy of the epick muse; and he dignified Alfred, 1723, with twelve books. But the opinion of the nation was now settled; a hero introduced by Blackmore was not likely to find either respect or kindness; Alfred took his place by Eliza, in silence and darkness: benevolence was ashamed to favour, and malice was weary of insulting. Of his four epick poems, the first had such reputation and popularity as enraged the criticks; the second was, at least, known enough to be ridiculed; the two last had neither friends nor enemies.

Contempt is a kind of gangrene, which, if it seizes one part of a character, corrupts all the rest by degrees. Blackmore, being despised as a poet, was, in time, neglected as a physician; his practice, which was once invidiously great, forsook him in the latter part of his life; but being by nature, or by principle, averse from idleness, he employed his unwelcome leisure in writing books on physick, and teaching others to cure those whom he could himself cure no longer. I know not whether I can enumerate all the treatises by which he has endeavoured to diffuse the art of healing; for there is scarcely any distemper, of dreadful name, which he has not taught his reader how to oppose. He has written on the smallpox, with a vehement invective against inoculation; on consumptions, the spleen, the gout, the rheumatism, the king's evil, the dropsy, the jaundice, the stone, the diabetes, and the plague.

Of those books, if I had read them, it could not be expected that I should be able to give a critical account. I have been told that there is something in them of vexation and discontent, discovered by a perpetual attempt to degrade physick from its sublimity, and to represent it as attainable without much previous or concomitant learning. By the transient glances which I have thrown upon them, I have observed an effected contempt of the ancients, and a supercilious derision of transmitted knowledge. Of this indecent arrogance, the following quotation, from his preface to the treatise on the smallpox, will afford a specimen; in which, when

the reader finds, what I fear is true, that, when he was censuring Hippocrates, he did not know the difference between aphorism and apophthegm, he will not pay much regard to his determinations concerning ancient learning.

"As for this book of aphorisms, it is like my lord Bacon's of the same title, a book of jests, or a grave collection of trite and trifling observations; of which though many are true and certain, yet they signify nothing, and may afford diversion, but no instruction; most of them being much inferior to the sayings of the wise men of Greece, which yet are so low and mean, that we are entertained every day with more valuable sentiments at the table-conversation of ingenious and learned men."

I am unwilling, however, to leave him in total disgrace, and will, therefore, quote, from another preface, a passage less reprehensible.

"Some gentlemen have been disingenuous and unjust to me, by wresting and forcing my meaning in the preface to another book, as if I condemned and exposed all learning, though they knew I declared that I greatly honoured and esteemed all men of superiour literature and erudition; and that I only undervalued false or superficial learning, that signifies nothing for the service of mankind; and that, as to physick, I expressly affirmed that learning must be joined with native genius, to make a physician of the first rank; but if those talents are separated, I asserted, and do still insist, that a man of native sagacity and diligence will prove

a more able and useful practiser, than a heavy notional scholar, encumbered with a heap of confused ideas."

He was not only a poet and a physician, but produced, likewise, a work of a different kind; a true and impartial History of the Conspiracy against King William, of glorious memory, in the year 1695. This I have never seen, but suppose it, at least, compiled with integrity. He engaged, likewise, in theological controversy, and wrote two books against the Arians; Just Prejudices against the Arian Hypothesis; and Modern Arians unmasked. Another of his works is Natural Theology, or Moral Duties considered apart from Positive; with some observations on the Desirableness and Necessity of a supernatural Revelation. This was the last book that he published. He left behind him the Accomplished Preacher, or an Essay upon Divine Eloquence; which was printed, after his death, by Mr. White, of Nayland, in Essex, the minister who attended his death-bed, and testified the fervent piety of his last hours. He died on the eighth of October, 1729.

Blackmore, by the unremitted enmity of the wits, whom he provoked more by his virtue than his dulness, has been exposed to worse treatment than he deserved. His name was so long used to point every epigram upon dull writers, that it became, at last, a by-word of contempt; but it deserves observation, that malignity takes hold only of his writings, and that his life passed without reproach, even when

his boldness of reprehension naturally turned upon him many eyes desirous to espy faults, which many tongues would have made haste to publish. But those who could not blame, could, at least, forbear to praise, and, therefore, of his private life and domestick character there are no memorials.

As an author he may justly claim the honours of magnanimity. The incessant attacks of his enemies, whether serious or merry, are never discovered to have disturbed his quiet, or to have lessened his confidence in himself; they neither awed him to silence nor to caution; they neither provoked him to petulance, nor depressed him to complaint. While the distributors of literary fame were endeavouring to depreciate and degrade him, he either despised or defied them, wrote on as he had written before, and never turned aside to quiet them by civility, or repress them by confutation.

He depended with great security on his own powers, and perhaps was, for that reason, less diligent in perusing books. His literature was, I think, but small. What he knew of antiquity, I suspect him to have gathered from modern compilers; but, though he could not boast of much critical knowledge, his mind was stored with general principles, and he left minute researches to those whom he considered as little minds.

With this disposition he wrote most of his poems. Having formed a magnificent design, he was careless of particular and subordinate elegancies; he studied no niceties of versification; he waited for no

felicities of fancy; but caught his first thoughts in the first words in which they were presented: nor does it appear that he saw beyond his own performances, or had ever elevated his views to that ideal perfection, which every genius, born to excel, is condemned always to pursue, and never overtake. In the first suggestions of his imagination he acquiesced; he thought them good, and did not seek for better. His works may be read a long time without the occurrence of a single line that stands prominent from the rest.

The poem on Creation has, however, the appearance of more circumspection; it wants neither harmony of numbers, accuracy of thought, nor elegance of diction: it has either been written with great care, or, what cannot be imagined of so long a work, with such felicity as made care less necessary.

Its two constituent parts are ratiocination and description. To reason in verse, is allowed to be difficult; but Blackmore not only reasons in verse, but very often reasons poetically; and finds the art of uniting ornament with strength, and ease with closeness. This is a skill which Pope might have condescended to learn from him, when he needed it so much in his Moral Essays.

In his descriptions, both of life and nature, the poet and the philosopher happily cooperate; truth is recommended by elegance, and elegance sustained by truth.

In the structure and order of the poem, not only the greater parts are properly consecutive,

but the didactick and illustrative paragraphs are so happily mingled, that labour is relieved by pleasure, and the attention is led on, through a long succession of varied excellence, to the original position, the fundamental principle of wisdom and of virtue.

As the heroick poems of Blackmore are now little read, it is thought proper to insert, as a specimen from Prince Arthur, the song of Mopas, mentioned by Molineux.

But that which Arthur with most pleasure heard,
Were noble strains, by Mopas sung, the bard
Who to his harp in lofty verse began,
And through the secret maze of nature ran.
He the great spirit sung, that all things fill'd,
That the tumultuous waves of chaos still'd:
Whose nod dispos'd the jarring seeds to peace,
And made the wars of hostile atoms cease.
All beings we in fruitful nature find,
Proceeded from the great eternal mind;
Streams of his unexhausted spring of power,
And cherish'd with his influence, endure.
He spread the pure cerulean fields on high,
And arch'd the chambers of the vaulted sky,
Which he, to suit their glory with their height,
Adorn'd with globes, that reel, as drunk with light.
His hand directed all the tuneful spheres,
He turn'd their orbs, and polish'd all the stars.
He fill'd the sun's vast lamp with golden light,
And bid the silver moon adorn the night.
He spread the airy ocean without shores,
Where birds are wafted with their feather'd oars.
Then sung the bard how the light vapours rise
From the warm earth, and cloud the smiling skies:
He sung how some, chill'd in their airy flight,
Fall scatter'd down in pearly dew by night;
How some, rais'd higher, sit in secret steams
On the reflected points of bounding beams,

Till, chill'd with cold, they shade th' ethereal plain,
Then on the thirsty earth descend in rain;
How some, whose parts a slight contexture show,
Sink hov'ring through the air, in fleecy snow;
How part is spun in silken threads, and clings
Entangled in the grass in gluey strings;
How others stamp to stones, with rushing sound
Fall from their crystal quarries to the ground;
How some are laid in trains, that kindled fly
In harmless fires by night, about the sky;
How some in winds blow with impetuous force,
And carry ruin where they bend their course,
While some conspire to form a gentle breeze,
To fan the air, and play among the trees;
How some, enrag'd, grow turbulent and loud,
Pent in the bowels of a frowning cloud,
That cracks, as if the axis of the world
Was broke, and heav'n's bright tow'rs were downwards hurl'd.
He sung how earth's wide ball, at Jove's command,
Did in the midst on airy columns stand;
And how the soul of plants, in prison held,
And bound with sluggish fetters, lies conceal'd,
Till with the spring's warm beams, almost releas'd
From the dull weight, with which it lay opprest,
Its vigour spreads, and makes the teeming earth
Heave up, and labour with the sprouting birth:
The active spirit freedom seeks in vain,
It only works and twists a stronger chain;
Urging its prison's sides to break away,
It makes that wider, where 'tis forc'd to stay:
Till, having form'd its living house, it rears
Its head, and in a tender plant appears.
Hence springs the oak, the beauty of the grove,
Whose stately trunk fierce storms can scarcely move.
Hence grows the cedar, hence the swelling vine
Does round the elm its purple clusters twine.
Hence painted flowers the smiling gardens bless,
Both with their fragrant scent and gaudy dress.
Hence the white lily in full beauty grows,
Hence the blue violet, and blushing rose.
He sung how sunbeams brood upon the earth,
And in the glebe hatch such a num'rous birth;

Which way the genial warmth in summer storms
Turns putrid vapours to a bed of worms;
How rain, transform'd by this prolifick power,
Falls from the clouds an animated shower.
He sung the embryo's growth within the womb,
And how the parts their various shapes assume;
With what rare art the wondrous structure's wrought,
From one crude mass to such perfection brought;
That no part useless, none misplac'd we see,
None are forgot, and more would monstrous be.

FENTON

THE brevity with which I am to write the account of Elijah Fenton, is not the effect of indifference or negligence. I have sought intelligence among his relations in his native county, but have not obtained it.

He was born near Newcastle, in Staffordshire, of an ancient family[h], whose estate was very considerable; but he was the youngest of eleven children, and being, therefore, necessarily destined to some lucrative employment, was first sent to school, and

[h] He was born at Shelton, near Newcastle, May 20, 1683; and was the youngest of eleven children of John Fenton, an attorney-at-law, and one of the coroners of the county of Stafford. His father died in 1694; and his grave, in the church-yard of Stoke upon Trent, is distinguished by the following elegant Latin inscription from the pen of his son:

H. S. E.
JOHANNES FENTON,
de Shelton
antiqua stirpe generosus:
juxta reliquias conjugis
CATHERINÆ
forma, moribus, pietate,
optimo viro dignissimæ;
Qui
intemerata in ecclesiam fide,
et virtutibus intaminatis enituit;
necnon ingenii lepore
bonis artibus expoliti,
ac animo erga omnes benevolo,
sibi suisque jucundus vixit.
Decem annos uxori dilectæ superstes
magnum sui desiderium bonis
omnibus reliquit,
anno { salutis humanæ 1694,
ætatis suæ 56.

See Gent. Mag. 1791, vol. lxi. p. 703. N.

afterwards to Cambridge[1], but with many other wise and virtuous men, who, at that time of discord and debate, consulted conscience, whether well or ill informed, more than interest, he doubted the legality of the government, and, refusing to qualify himself for publick employment by the oaths required, left the university without a degree; but I never heard that the enthusiasm of opposition impelled him to separation from the church.

By this perverseness of integrity he was driven out a commoner of nature, excluded from the regular modes of profit and prosperity, and reduced to pick up a livelihood uncertain and fortuitous; but it must be remembered that he kept his name unsullied, and never suffered himself to be reduced, like too many of the same sect, to mean arts and dishonourable shifts. Whoever mentioned Fenton, mentioned him with honour.

The life that passes in penury must necessarily pass in obscurity. It is impossible to trace Fenton from year to year, or to discover what means he used for his support. He was awhile secretary to Charles, earl of Orrery, in Flanders, and tutor to his young son, who afterwards mentioned him with great esteem and tenderness. He was, at one time, assistant in the school of Mr. Bonwicke, in Surrey; and at another kept a school for himself at Sevenoaks, in Kent, which he brought into

[1] He was entered of Jesus college, and took a bachelor's degree in 1704: but it appears, by the list of Cambridge graduates, that he removed, in 1726, to Trinity hall. N.

reputation; but was persuaded to leave it, 1710, by Mr. St. John, with promises of a more honourable employment.

His opinions, as he was a nonjuror, seem not to have been remarkably rigid. He wrote with great zeal and affection the praises of queen Anne, and very willingly and liberally extolled the duke of Marlborough, when he was, 1707, at the height of his glory.

He expressed still more attention to Marlborough and his family by an elegiack pastoral on the marquis of Blandford, which could be prompted only by respect or kindness; for neither the duke nor dutchess desired the praise, or liked the cost of patronage.

The elegance of his poetry entitled him to the company of the wits of his time, and the amiableness of his manners made him loved wherever he was known. Of his friendship to Southern and Pope there are lasting monuments.

He published, in 1707[1], a collection of poems.

By Pope he was once placed in a station that might have been of great advantage. Craggs, when he was advanced to be secretary of state, about 1720, feeling his own want of literature, desired Pope to procure him an instructor, by whose help he might supply the deficiencies of his education. Pope recommended Fenton, in whom Craggs found all that he was seeking. There was now a prospect of ease and plenty, for Fenton had merit, and Craggs had

[1]1717. M.

generosity; but the smallpox suddenly put an end to the pleasing expectation.

When Pope, after the great success of his Iliad, undertook the Odyssey, being, as it seems, weary of translating, he determined to engage auxiliaries. Twelve books he took to himself, and twelve he distributed between Broome and Fenton: the books allotted to Fenton were the first, the fourth, the nineteenth, and the twentieth. It is observable, that he did not take the eleventh, which he had before translated into blank verse; neither did Pope claim it, but committed it to Broome. How the two associates performed their parts is well known to the readers of poetry, who have never been able to distinguish their books from those of Pope.

In 1723 was performed his tragedy of Mariamne; to which Southern, at whose house it was written, is said to have contributed such hints as his theatrical experience supplied. When it was shown to Cibber, it was rejected by him, with the additional insolence of advising Fenton to engage himself in some employment of honest labour, by which he might obtain that support which he could never hope from his poetry. The play was acted at the other theatre; and the brutal petulance of Cibber was confuted, though, perhaps, not shamed, by general applause. Fenton's profits are said to have amounted to near a thousand pounds, with which he discharged a debt contracted by his attendance at court.

Fenton seems to have had some peculiar system of versification. Mariamne is written in lines of ten

syllables, with few of those redundant terminations which the drama not only admits, but requires, as more nearly approaching to real dialogue. The tenour of his verse is so uniform that it cannot be thought casual; and yet upon what principle he so constructed it, is difficult to discover.

The mention of his play brings to my mind a very trifling occurrence. Fenton was one day in the company of Broome, his associate, and Ford, a clergyman[k], at that time too well known, whose abilities, instead of furnishing convivial merriment to the voluptuous and dissolute, might have enabled him to excel among the virtuous and the wise. They determined all to see the Merry Wives of Windsor, which was acted that night; and Fenton, as a dramatick poet, took them to the stage-door; where the door-keeper, inquiring who they were, was told that they were three very necessary men, Ford, Broome, and Fenton. The name in the play, which Pope restored to Brook, was then Broome.

It was, perhaps, after his play that he undertook to revise the punctuation of Milton's poems, which, as the author neither wrote the original copy, nor corrected the press, was supposed capable of amendment. To this edition he prefixed a short and elegant account of Milton's life, written, at once, with tenderness and integrity.

He published, likewise, 1729, a very splendid

[k] Ford was Johnson's relation, his mother's nephew, and is said to have been the original of the parson in Hogarth's Modern Midnight Conversation. See Boswell, i. and iii, Ed.

edition of Waller, with notes often useful, often entertaining, but too much extended by long quotations from Clarendon. Illustrations drawn from a book so easily consulted, should be made by reference rather than transcription.

The latter part of his life was calm and pleasant. The relict of sir William Trumbull invited him, by Pope's recommendation, to educate her son; whom he first instructed at home, and then attended to Cambridge. The lady afterwards detained him with her as the auditor of her accounts. He often wandered to London, and amused himself with the conversation of his friends.

He died[1] in 1730, at East Hampstead, in Berkshire, the seat of lady Trumbal; and Pope, who had been always his friend, honoured him with an epitaph, of which he borrowed the two first lines from Crashaw.

Fenton was tall and bulky, inclined to corpulence, which he did not lessen by much exercise; for he was very sluggish and sedentary, rose late, and when he had risen, sat down to his books or papers. A woman that once waited on him in a lodging, told him, as she said, that he would "lie a-bed, and be fed with a spoon." This, however, was not the worst that might have been prognosticated; for Pope says, in his letters, that "he died of indolence;" but his immediate distemper was the gout.

Of his morals and his conversation the account is uniform: he was never named but with praise and

[1] July 16.

fondness, as a man in the highest degree amiable and excellent. Such was the character given him by the earl of Orrery, his pupil; such is the testimony of Pope[m]; and such were the suffrages of all who could boast of his acquaintance.

By a former writer of his life[n], a story is told, which ought not to be forgotten. He used, in the latter part of his time, to pay his relations in the country a yearly visit. At an entertainment made for the family by his elder brother, he observed, that one of his sisters, who had married unfortunately, was absent, and found, upon inquiry, that distress had made her thought unworthy of invitation. As she was at no great distance, he refused to sit at the table till she was called, and, when she had taken her place, was careful to show her particular attention.

His collection of poems is now to be considered. The ode to the Sun is written upon a common plan, without uncommon sentiments; but its greatest fault is its length. No poem shall be long of which the purpose is only to strike the fancy, without enlightening the understanding by precept, ratiocination, or narrative. A blaze first pleases, and then tires the sight.

Of Florelio it is sufficient to say, that it is an occasional pastoral, which implies something neither natural nor artificial, neither comick nor serious.

[m] Spence.

[n] Shiels, Dr. Johnson's amanuensis, who says, in Cibber's Lives of the Poets, that he received this anecdote from a gentleman resident in Staffordshire. M.

The next ode is irregular, and, therefore, defective. As the sentiments are pious, they cannot easily be new; for what can be added to topicks on which successive ages have been employed!

Of the Paraphrase on Isaiah nothing very favourable can be said. Sublime and solemn prose gains little by a change to blank verse; and the paraphrast has deserted his original, by admitting images not Asiatick, at least not Judaical:

> Returning peace,
> Dove-ey'd, and rob'd in white.

Of his petty poems, some are very trifling, without any thing to be praised, either in the thought or expression. He is unlucky in his competitions; he tells the same idle tale with Congreve, and does not tell it so well. He translates from Ovid the same epistle as Pope; but, I am afraid, not with equal happiness.

To examine his performances, one by one, would be tedious. His translation from Homer into blank verse will find few readers, while another can be had in rhyme. The piece addressed to Lambarde is no disagreeable specimen of epistolary poetry; and his ode to the lord Gower was pronounced, by Pope, the next ode in the English language to Dryden's Cecilia. Fenton may be justly styled an excellent versifier and a good poet.

Whatever I have said of Fenton is confirmed by Pope in a letter, by which he communicated to Broome an account of his death:

TO

The Rev^{d}. Mr. BROOME,

At PULHAM, near HARLESTONE

NOR

[By BECCLES Bag.] SUFFOLKE

D^{r} SIR,

I intended to write to you on this melancholy subject, the death of Mr. Fenton, before y^{rs} came; but stay'd to have inform'd myself & you of y^{e} circumstances of it. All I hear is, that he felt a Gradual Decay, tho' so early in Life, & was declining for 5 or 6 months. It was not, as I apprehended, the Gout in his Stomach, but I believe rather a Complication first of Gross Humours, as he was naturally corpulent, not discharging themselves, as he used no sort of Exercise. No man better bore y^{e} approaches of his Dissolution (as I am told) or with less ostentation yielded up his Being. The great modesty w^{ch} you know was natural to him, and y^{e} great Contempt he had for all Sorts of Vanity and Parade, never appeared more than in his last moments: He had a conscious Satisfaction (no doubt) in acting right, in feeling himself honest, true, & unpretending to more than was his own. So he dyed, as he lived, with that secret, yet sufficient, Contentment.

As to any Papers left behind him, I dare say they can be but few; for this reason: He never wrote out of Vanity, or thought much of the Applause of Men. I know an Instance where he did his utmost to conceal his own merit that way; and if we join to this

his natural Love of Ease, I fancy we must expect little of this sort: at least I hear of none except some few further remarks on Waller (w^ch his cautious integrity made him leave an order to be given to Mr. Tonson) and perhaps, tho' 'tis many years since I saw it, a Translation of y^e first Book of Oppian. He had begun a Tragedy of Dion, but made small progress in it.

As to his other affairs, he died poor, but honest, leaving no Debts, or Legacies; except of a few p^ds to Mr. Trumbull and my Lady, in token of respect, Gratefulness, and mutual Esteem.

I shall with pleasure take upon me to draw this amiable, quiet, deserving, unpretending, Christian and Philosophical character, in his Epitaph. There Truth may be spoken in a few words: as for Flourish, & Oratory, & Poetry, I leave them to younger and more lively Writers, such as love writing for writing sake, & w^d rather show their own Fine Parts, y^n Report the valuable ones of any other man. So the Elegy I renounce.

I condole with you from my heart, on the loss of so worthy a man, and a Friend to us both. Now he is gone, I must tell you he has done you many a good office, and set your character in y^e fairest light, to some who either mistook you, or knew you not. I doubt not he has done the same for me.

Adieu: Let us love his Memory, and profit by his example. I am very sincerely

D^r Sir, Your affectionate & real Servant,

Aug. 29th 1730. A. Pope.

GAY

JOHN GAY, descended from an old family that had been long in possession of the manor of° Goldworthy in Devonshire, was born in 1688, at or near Barnstaple, where he was educated by Mr. Luck, who taught the school of that town with good reputation, and, a little before he retired from it, published a volume of Latin and English verses. Under such a master he was likely to form a taste for poetry. Being born without prospect of hereditary riches, he was sent to London in his youth, and placed apprentice to a silkmercer.

How long he continued behind the counter, or with what degree of softness and dexterity he received and accommodated the ladies, as he probably took no delight in telling it, is not known. The report is, that he was soon weary of either the restraint or servility of his occupation, and easily persuaded his master to discharge him.

The dutchess of Monmouth, remarkable for inflexible perseverance in her demand to be treated as a princess, in 1712 took Gay into her service as secretary: by quitting a shop for such service, he might gain leisure, but he certainly advanced little in the boast of independence. Of his leisure he made so good use, that he published, next year, a poem on Rural Sports, and inscribed it to Mr. Pope, who was then rising fast into reputation. Pope was pleased with the honour; and when he

° Goldworthy does not appear in the Villare. Dr. J.— Holdsworthy is probably meant.

became acquainted with Gay, found such attractions in his manners and conversation, that he seems to have received him into his inmost confidence; and a friendship was formed between them which lasted to their separation by death, without any known abatement on either part. Gay was the general favourite of the whole association of wits; but they regarded him as a playfellow rather than a partner, and treated him with more fondness than respect.

Next year he published the Shepherd's Week, six English pastorals, in which the images are drawn from real life, such as it appears among the rusticks in parts of England remote from London. Steele, in some papers of the Guardian had praised Ambrose Philips, as the pastoral writer that yielded only to Theocritus, Virgil, and Spenser. Pope, who had also published pastorals, not pleased to be overlooked, drew up a comparison of his own compositions with those of Philips, in which he covertly gave himself the preference, while he seemed to disown it. Not content with this, he is supposed to have incited Gay to write the Shepherd's Week, to show, that if it be necessary to copy nature with minuteness, rural life must be exhibited such as grossness and ignorance have made it. So far the plan was reasonable; but the pastorals are introduced by a Proem, written with such imitation as they could attain of obsolete language, and, by consequence, in a style that was never spoken nor written in any age, or in any place.

But the effect of reality and truth became conspic-

uous, even when the intention was to show them grovelling and degraded. These pastorals became popular, and were read with delight, as just representations of rural manners and occupations, by those who had no interest in the rivalry of the poets, nor knowledge of the critical dispute.

In 1713 he brought a comedy, called the Wife of Bath, upon the stage, but it received no applause: he printed it, however, and seventeen years after, having altered it, and, as he thought, adapted it more to the publick taste, he offered it again to the town; but, though he was flushed with the success of the Beggars' Opera, had the mortification to see it again rejected.

In the last year of queen Anne's life, Gay was made secretary to the earl of Clarendon, ambassador to the court of Hanover. This was a station that naturally gave him hopes of kindness from every party; but the queen's death put an end to her favours, and he had dedicated his Shepherd's Week to Bolingbroke, which Swift considered as the crime that obstructed all kindness from the house of Hanover.

He did not, however, omit to improve the right which his office had given him to the notice of the royal family. On the arrival of the princess of Wales, he wrote a poem, and obtained so much favour, that both the prince and princess went to see his What d'ye call it, a kind of mock tragedy, in which the images were comick, and the action grave; so that, as Pope relates, Mr. Cromwell, who could not hear what

was said, was at a loss how to reconcile the laughter of the audience with the solemnity of the scene.

Of this performance the value certainly is but little; but it was one of the lucky trifles that give pleasure by novelty, and was so much favoured by the audience, that envy appeared against it in the form of criticism; and Griffin, a player, in conjunction with Mr. Theobald, a man afterwards more remarkable, produced a pamphlet, called the Key to the What d'ye call it; which, says Gay, "calls me a blockhead, and Mr. Pope a knave."

But fortune has always been inconstant. Not long afterwards, 1717, he endeavoured to entertain the town with Three Hours after Marriage; a comedy written, as there is sufficient reason for believing, by the joint assistance of Pope and Arbuthnot. One purpose of it was to bring into contempt Dr. Woodward, the fossilist, a man not really or justly contemptible. It had the fate which such outrages deserve: the scene in which Woodward was directly and apparently ridiculed, by the introduction of a mummy and a crocodile, disgusted the audience, and the performance was driven off the stage with general condemnation.

Gay is represented as a man easily incited to hope, and deeply depressed when his hopes were disappointed. This is not the character of a hero; but it may naturally imply something more generally welcome, a soft and civil companion. Whoever is apt to hope good from others is diligent to please them: but he that believes his powers strong enough

to force their own way, commonly tries only to please himself.

He had been simple enough to imagine that those who laughed at the What d'ye call it, would raise the fortune of its author; and, finding nothing done, sunk into dejection. His friends endeavoured to divert him. The earl of Burlington sent him, 1716, into Devonshire; the year after, Mr. Pulteney took him to Aix; and, in the following year, lord Harcourt invited him to his seat, where, during his visit, the two rural lovers were killed with lightning, as is particularly told in Pope's letters.

Being now generally known, he published, 1720, his poems, by subscription, with such success, that he raised a thousand pounds; and called his friends to a consultation, what use might be best made of it. Lewis, the steward of lord Oxford, advised him to intrust it to the funds, and live upon the interest; Arbuthnot bade him intrust it to providence, and live upon the principal; Pope directed him, and was seconded by Swift, to purchase an annuity.

Gay, in that disastrous year[p], had a present from young Craggs of some south-sea stock, and once supposed himself to be master of twenty thousand pounds. His friends persuaded him to sell his share; but he dreamed of dignity and splendour, and could not bear to obstruct his own fortune. He was then importuned to sell as much as would purchase a hundred a year for life, "which," says Fenton, "will make you sure of a clean shirt and a shoulder of

[p] Spence.

mutton every day." This counsel was rejected: the profit and principal were lost, and Gay sunk under the calamity so low that his life became in danger.

By the care of his friends, among whom Pope appears to have shown particular tenderness, his health was restored; and, returning to his studies, he wrote a tragedy, called the Captives, which he was invited to read before the princess of Wales. When the hour came, he saw the princess and her ladies all in expectation, and advancing with reverence, too great for any other attention, stumbled at a stool, and falling forward threw down a weighty japan screen. The princess started, the ladies screamed, and poor Gay, after all the disturbance, was still to read his play[q].

The fate of the Captives, which was acted at Drury-lane in 1723–4, I know not[r]; but he now thought himself in favour, and undertook, 1726, to write a volume of fables for the improvement of the young duke of Cumberland. For this he is said to have been promised a reward, which he had, doubtless, magnified with all the wild expectations of indigence and vanity.

Next year the prince and princess became king and queen, and Gay was to be great and happy; but, upon the settlement of the household, he found himself appointed gentleman usher to the princess

[q] This mishap of Gay's is said to have suggested the story of the scholar's bashfulness in the 157th Rambler; and to similar stories in the Adventurer and Repton's Variety. Ed.

[r] It was acted seven nights. The author's third night was by command of their royal highnesses. R.

Louisa. By this offer he thought himself insulted, and sent a message to the queen, that he was too old for the place. There seem to have been many machinations employed afterwards in his favour; and diligent court was paid to Mrs. Howard, afterwards countess of Suffolk, who was much beloved by the king and queen, to engage her interest for his promotion; but solicitations, verses, and flatteries, were thrown away; the lady heard them, and did nothing.

All the pain which he suffered from the neglect, or, as he, perhaps, termed it, the ingratitude of the court, may be supposed to have been driven away by the unexampled success of the Beggars' Opera. This play, written in ridicule of the musical Italian drama, was first offered to Cibber and his brethren at Drury-lane, and rejected; it being then carried to Rich, had the effect, as was ludicrously said, of making Gay *rich*, and Rich *gay*.

Of this lucky piece, as the reader cannot but wish to know the original and progress, I have inserted the relation which Spence has given in Pope's words.

"Dr. Swift had been observing once to Mr. Gay, what an odd pretty sort of a thing a Newgate pastoral might make. Gay was inclined to try at such a thing, for some time; but afterwards thought it would be better to write a comedy on the same plan. This was what gave rise to the Beggars' Opera. He began on it; and when first he mentioned it to Swift, the doctor did not much like the project. As he carried it on, he showed what he

wrote to both of us, and we now and then gave a correction, or a word or two of advice; but it was wholly of his own writing. When it was done, neither of us thought it would succeed. We showed it to Congreve; who, after reading it over, said, it would either take greatly, or be damned confoundedly. We were all, at the first night of it, in great uncertainty of the event; till we were very much encouraged by overhearing the duke of Argyle, who sat in the next box to us, say, 'It will do—it must do! I see it in the eyes of them.' This was a good while before the first act was over, and so gave us ease soon; for that duke, besides his own good taste, has a particular knack, as any one now living, in discovering the taste of the publick. He was quite right in this, as usual; the good-nature of the audience appeared stronger and stronger every act, and ended in a clamour of applause."

Its reception is thus recorded in the notes to the Dunciad.

"This piece was received with greater applause than was ever known. Besides being acted in London sixty-three days, without interruption, and renewed the next season with equal applause, it spread into all the great towns of England; was played in many places to the thirtieth and fortieth time; at Bath and Bristol fifty, &c. It made its progress into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, where it was performed twenty-four days successively. The ladies carried about with them the favourite songs of it in fans, and houses were furnished with

it in screens. The fame of it was not confined to the author only. The person who acted Polly, till then obscure, became, all at once, the favourite of the town; her pictures were engraved, and sold in great numbers; her life written, books of letters and verses to her published, and pamphlets made even of her sayings and jests. Furthermore, it drove out of England, for that season, the Italian opera, which had carried all before it for ten years.''

Of this performance, when it was printed, the reception was different, according to the different opinion of its readers. Swift commended it for the excellence of its morality, as a piece that ''placed all kinds of vice in the strongest and most odious light;'' but others, and among them Dr. Herring, afterwards archbishop of Canterbury, censured it, as giving encouragement not only to vice, but to crimes, by making a highwayman the hero, and dismissing him, at last, unpunished. It has been even said, that, after the exhibition of the Beggars' Opera, the gangs of robbers were evidently multiplied.

Both these decisions are surely exaggerated. The play, like many others, was plainly written only to divert, without any moral purpose, and is, therefore, not likely to do good; nor can it be conceived, without more speculation than life requires or admits, to be productive of much evil. Highwaymen and housebreakers seldom frequent the playhouse, or mingle in any elegant diversion; nor is it possible for any one to imagine that he may rob with

safety, because he sees Macheath reprieved upon the stage.

This objection, however, or some other, rather political than moral, obtained such prevalence, that when Gay produced a second part, under the name of Polly, it was prohibited by the lord chamberlain; and he was forced to recompense his repulse by a subscription, which is said to have been so liberally bestowed, that what he called oppression ended in profit. The publication was so much favoured, that though the first part gained him four hundred pounds, near thrice as much was the profit of the second[s].

He received yet another recompense for this supposed hardship in the affectionate attention of the duke and dutchess of Queensberry, into whose house he was taken, and with whom he passed the remaining part of his life. The duke, considering his want of economy, undertook the management of his money, and gave it to him as he wanted it[t]. But it is supposed that the discountenance of the court sunk deep into his heart, and gave him more discontent than the applauses or tenderness of his friends could overpower. He soon fell into his old distemper, an habitual colick, and languished, though with many intervals of ease and cheerfulness, till a violent fit, at last, seized him, and hurried him to the grave, as Arbuthnot reported, with more precipitance than he had ever known. He died on the fourth of December, 1732, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. The letter, which brought an account of his death to

[s] Spence. [t] Ibid.

Swift, was laid by, for some days, unopened, because, when he received it, he was impressed with the preconception of some misfortune.

After his death, was published a second volume of fables, more political than the former. His opera of Achilles was acted, and the profits were given to two widow sisters, who inherited what he left, as his lawful heirs; for he died without a will, though he had gathered three thousand pounds[u]. There have appeared, likewise, under his name, a comedy, called the Distrest Wife, and the Rehearsal at Gotham, a piece of humour.

The character given him by Pope is this, that "he was a natural man, without design, who spoke what he thought, and just as he thought it;" and that "he was of a timid temper, and fearful of giving offence to the great;" "which caution, however," says Pope, "was of no avail[v]."

As a poet, he cannot be rated very high. He was, as I once heard a female critick remark, "of a lower order." He had not in any great degree the "mens divinior," the dignity of genius. Much, however, must be allowed to the author of a new species of composition, though it be not of the highest kind. We owe to Gay the ballad opera; a mode of comedy which, at first, was supposed to delight only by its novelty, but has now, by the experience of half a century, been found so well accommodated to the disposition of a popular audience, that it is likely to

[u] Spence. [v] Ibid.

keep long possession of the stage. Whether this new drama was the product of judgment or of luck, the praise of it must be given to the inventor; and there are many writers read with more reference, to whom such merit of originality cannot be attributed.

His first performance, the Rural Sports, is such as was easily planned and executed; it is never contemptible, nor ever excellent. The Fan is one of those mythological fictions which antiquity delivers ready to the hand, but which, like other things that lie open to every one's use, are of little value. The attention naturally retires from a new tale of Venus, Diana, and Minerva.

His fables seem to have been a favourite work; for, having published one volume, he left another behind him. Of this kind of fables, the authors do not appear to have formed any distinct or settled notion. Phædrus evidently confounds them with tales; and Gay, both with tales and allegorical prosopopœias. A fable, or apologue, such as is now under consideration, seems to be, in its genuine state, a narrative in which beings irrational, and, sometimes, inanimate, "arbores loquuntur, non tantum feræ," are, for the purpose of moral instruction, feigned to act and speak with human interests and passions. To this description the compositions of Gay do not always conform. For a fable, he gives, now and then, a tale, or an abstracted allegory; and, from some, by whatever name they may be called, it will be difficult to extract any moral principle. They are, however, told with liveliness; the

versification is smooth; and the diction, though, now and then, a little constrained by the measure or the rhyme, is generally happy.

To Trivia may be allowed all that it claims; it is sprightly, various, and pleasant. The subject is of that kind which Gay was, by nature, qualified to adorn; yet some of his decorations may be justly wished away. An honest blacksmith might have done for Patty what is performed by Vulcan. The appearance of Cloacina is nauseous and superfluous; a shoeboy could have been produced by the casual cohabitation of mere mortals. Horace's rule is broken in both cases; there is no "dignus vindice nodus," no difficulty that required any supernatural interposition. A patten may be made by the hammer of a mortal; and a bastard may be dropped by a human strumpet. On great occasions, and on small, the mind is repelled by useless and apparent falsehood.

Of his little poems the publick judgment seems to be right; they are neither much esteemed, nor totally despised. The story of the Apparition is borrowed from one of the tales of Poggio. Those that please least are the pieces to which Gulliver gave occasion; for who can much delight in the echo of an unnatural fiction?

Dione is a counterpart to Aminta, and Pastor Fido, and other trifles of the same kind, easily imitated, and unworthy of imitation. What the Italians call comedies, from a happy conclusion, Gay calls a tragedy, from a mournful event; but the style of

the Italians and of Gay is equally tragical. There is something in the poetical Arcadia so remote from known reality and speculative possibility, that we can never support its representation through a long work. A pastoral of a hundred lines may be endured; but who will hear of sheep and goats, and myrtle bowers, and purling rivulets, through five acts? Such scenes please barbarians in the dawn of literature, and children in the dawn of life; but will be, for the most part, thrown away, as men grow wise, and nations grow learned.

OF George Granville, or, as others write, Greenville, or Grenville, afterwards lord Lansdowne, of Bideford, in the county of Devon, less is known than his name and high rank might give reason to expect. He was born about 1667, the son of Bernard Greenville, who was entrusted, by Monk, with the most private transactions of the restoration, and the grandson of sir Bevil Greenville, who died, in the king's cause, at the battle of Lansdowne.

His early education was superintended by sir William Ellis; and his progress was such, that, before the age of twelve, he was sent to Cambridge[w], where he pronounced a copy of his own verses to the princess Mary d'Este, of Modena, then dutchess of York, when she visited the university.

At the accession of king James, being now at eighteen, he again exerted his poetical powers, and addressed the new monarch in three short pieces, of which the first is profane, and the two others such as a boy might be expected to produce; but he was commended by old Waller, who, perhaps, was pleased to find himself imitated, in six lines, which though they begin with nonsense and end with dulness, excited in the young author a rapture of acknowledgment.

In numbers such as Waller's self might use.

It was probably about this time that he wrote

[w] To Trinity college. By the university register it appears, that he was admitted to his master's degree in 1679; we must, therefore, set the year of his birth some years back. H.

the poem to the earl of Peterborough, upon his accomplishment of the duke of York's marriage with the princess of Modena, whose charms appear to have gained a strong prevalence over his imagination, and upon whom nothing ever has been charged but imprudent piety, and intemperate and misguided zeal for the propagation of popery.

However faithful Granville might have been to the king, or however enamoured of the queen, he has left no reason for supposing that he approved either the artifices or the violence with which the king's religion was insinuated or obtruded. He endeavoured to be true, at once, to the king and to the church.

Of this regulated loyalty he has transmitted to posterity a sufficient proof, in the letter which he wrote to his father, about a month before the prince of Orange landed.

"Mar, near Doncaster, Oct. 6, 1688.

"To the honourable Mr. Barnard Granville, at the earl of Bathe's, St. James's.

"Sir,

"Your having no prospect of obtaining a commission for me, can no way alter or cool my desire at this important juncture to venture my life, in some manner or other, for my king and my country.

"I cannot bear living under the reproach of lying obscure and idle in a country retirement, when every man who has the least sense of honour should be preparing for the field.

"You may remember, sir, with what reluctance I submitted to your commands upon Monmouth's

rebellion, when no importunity could prevail with you to permit me to leave the academy: I was too young to be hazarded; but, give me leave to say, it is glorious at any age to die for one's country; and the sooner, the nobler the sacrifice.

"I am now older by three years. My uncle Bathe was not so old when he was left among the slain at the battle of Newbury; nor you yourself, sir, when you made your escape from your tutors, to join your brother at the defence of Scilly.

"The same cause is now come round about again. The king has been misled; let those who have misled him be answerable for it. Nobody can deny but he is sacred in his own person; and it is every honest man's duty to defend it.

"You are pleased to say, it is yet doubtful if the Hollanders are rash enough to make such an attempt; but, be that as it will, I beg leave to insist upon it, that I may be presented to his majesty, as one whose utmost ambition it is to devote his life to his service, and my country's, after the example of all my ancestors.

"The gentry assembled at York, to agree upon the choice of representatives for the county, have prepared an address, to assure his majesty they are ready to sacrifice their lives and fortunes for him upon this and all other occasions; but, at the same time, they humbly beseech him to give them such magistrates as may be agreeable to the laws of the land; for, at present, there is no authority to which they can legally submit.

"They have been beating up for volunteers at York, and the towns adjacent, to supply the regiments at Hull; but nobody will list.

"By what I can hear, every body wishes well to the king; but they would be glad his ministers were hanged.

"The winds continue so contrary, that no landing can be so soon as was apprehended; therefore I may hope, with your leave and assistance, to be in readiness before any action can begin. I beseech you, sir, most humbly and most earnestly, to add this one act of indulgence more to so many other testimonies which I have constantly received of your goodness; and be pleased to believe me always, with the utmost duty and submission, sir,

"Your most dutiful son,

"and most obedient servant,

"GEO. GRANVILLE."

Through the whole reign of king William he is supposed to have lived in literary retirement, and indeed had, for some time, few other pleasures but those, of study in his power. He was, as the biographers observe, the younger son of a younger brother; a denomination by which our ancestors proverbially expressed the lowest state of penury and dependence. He is said, however, to have preserved himself at this time from disgrace and difficulties by economy, which he forgot or neglected in life more advanced, and in better fortune.

About this time he became enamoured of the

countess of Newburgh, whom he has celebrated with so much ardour by the name of Mira. He wrote verses to her, before he was three-and-twenty, and may be forgiven if he regarded the face more than the mind. Poets are sometimes in too much haste to praise.

In the time of his retirement it is probable that he composed his dramatick pieces, the She-Gallants, acted 1696, which he revised, and called Once a Lover and always a Lover; the Jew of Venice, altered from Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, 1698; Heroick Love, a tragedy, 1701; the British Enchanters, 1706, a dramatick poem; and Peleus and Thetis, a mask, written to accompany the Jew of Venice.

The comedies, which he has not printed in his own edition of his works, I never saw; Once a Lover and always a Lover, is said to be, in a great degree, indecent and gross. Granville could not admire without bigotry; he copied the wrong as well as the right, from his masters, and may be supposed to have learned obscenity from Wycherley, as he learned mythology from Waller.

In his Jew of Venice, as Rowe remarks, the character of Shylock is made comick, and we are prompted to laughter, instead of detestation.

It is evident that Heroick Love was written, and presented on the stage, before the death of Dryden. It is a mythological tragedy, upon the love of Agamemnon and Chryseis, and, therefore, easily sunk into neglect, though praised in verse by Dryden, and in prose by Pope.

It is concluded by the wise Ulysses with this speech:

> Fate holds the strings, and men like children move
> But as they're led; success is from above.

At the accession of queen Anne, having his fortune improved by bequests from his father, and his uncle the earl of Bath, he was chosen into parliament for Fowey. He soon after engaged in a joint translation of the Invectives against Philip, with a design, surely weak and puerile, of turning the thunder of Demosthenes upon the head of Lewis.

He afterwards, in 1706, had his estate again augmented by an inheritance from his elder brother, sir Bevil Granville, who, as he returned from the government of Barbadoes, died at sea. He continued to serve in parliament; and, in the ninth year of queen Anne, was chosen knight of the shire for Cornwall.

At the memorable change of the ministry, 1710, he was made secretary of war, in the place of Mr. Robert Walpole.

Next year, when the violence of party made twelve peers in a day, Mr. Granville became lord Lansdowne baron Bideford, by a promotion justly remarked to be not invidious, because he was the heir of a family in which two peerages, that of the earl of Bath, and lord Granville of Potheridge, had lately become extinct. Being now high in the queen's favour, he, 1712, was appointed comptroller of the household, and a privy counsellor; and to his other honours was added the dedication of Pope's

Windsor Forest. He was advanced, next year, to be treasurer of the household.

Of these favours he soon lost all but his title; for, at the accession of king George, his place was given to the earl Cholmondeley, and he was persecuted with the rest of his party. Having protested against the bill for attainting Ormond and Bolingbroke, he was, after the insurrection in Scotland, seized, Sept. 26, 1715, as a suspected man, and confined in the Tower, till Feb. 8, 1717, when he was at last released, and restored to his seat in parliament; where, 1719, he made a very ardent and animated speech against the repeal of the bill to prevent occasional conformity, which, however, though it was then printed, he has not inserted into his works.

Some time afterwards, about 1722, being, perhaps, embarrassed by his profusion, he went into foreign countries, with the usual pretence of recovering his health. In this state of leisure and retirement, he received the first volume of Burnet's History, of which he cannot be supposed to have approved the general tendency, and where he thought himself able to detect some particular falsehoods. He, therefore, undertook the vindication of general Monk from some calumnies of Dr. Burnet, and some misrepresentations of Mr. Echard. This was answered civilly by Mr. Thomas Burnet, and Oldmixon; and more roughly by Dr. Colbatch.

His other historical performance is a defence of his relation, sir Richard Greenville, whom lord Clarendon has shown in a form very unamiable. So

much is urged in this apology to justify many actions that have been represented as culpable, and to palliate the rest, that the reader is reconciled for the greater part; and it is made very probable that Clarendon was by personal enmity disposed to think the worst of Greenville, as Greenville was also very willing to think the worst of Clarendon. These pieces were published at his return to England.

Being now desirous to conclude his labours, and enjoy his reputation, he published, 1732, a very beautiful and splendid edition of his works, in which he omitted what he disapproved, and enlarged what seemed deficient.

He now went to court, and was kindly received by queen Caroline; to whom and to the princess Anne, he presented his works, with verses on the blank leaves, with which he concluded his poetical labours.

He died in Hanover-square, Jan. 30, 1735, having a few days before buried his wife, the lady Anne Villiers, widow to Mr. Thynne, by whom he had four daughters, but no son.

Writers commonly derive their reputation from their works; but there are works which owe their reputation to the character of the writer. The publick sometimes has its favourites, whom it rewards for one species of excellence with the honours due to another. From him whom we reverence for his beneficence we do not willingly withhold the praise of genius; a man of exalted merit becomes, at once, an accomplished writer, as a beauty finds no great difficulty in passing for a wit.

Granville was a man illustrious by his birth, and, therefore, attracted notice: since he is by Pope styled "the polite," he must be supposed elegant in his manners, and generally loved: he was, in times of contest and turbulence, steady to his party, and obtained that esteem which is always conferred upon firmness and consistency. With those advantages having learned the art of versifying, he declared himself a poet; and his claim to the laurel was allowed.

But by a critick of a later generation, who takes up his book without any favourable prejudices, the praise already received will be thought sufficient; for his works do not show him to have had much comprehension from nature, or illumination from learning. He seems to have had no ambition above the imitation of Waller, of whom he has copied the faults, and very little more. He is for ever amusing himself with the puerilities of mythology; his king is Jupiter, who, if the queen brings no children, has a barren Juno. The queen is compounded of Juno, Venus, and Minerva. His poem on the dutchess of Grafton's lawsuit, after having rattled awhile with Juno and Pallas, Mars and Alcides, Cassiope, Niobe, and the Propetides, Hercules, Minos, and Rhadamanthus, at last concludes its folly with profaneness.

His verses to Mira, which are most frequently mentioned, have little in them of either art or nature, of the sentiments of a lover, or the language of a poet: there may be found, now and then,

a happier effort; but they are commonly feeble and unaffecting, or forced and extravagant.

His little pieces are seldom either sprightly or elegant, either keen or weighty. They are trifles written by idleness, and published by vanity. But his prologues and epilogues have a just claim to praise.

The Progress of Beauty seems one of his most elaborate pieces, and is not deficient in splendour and gaiety; but the merit of original thought is wanting. Its highest praise is the spirit with which he celebrates king James's consort, when she was a queen no longer.

The Essay on unnatural Flights in Poetry, is not inelegant nor injudicious, and has something of vigour beyond most of his other performances: his precepts are just, and his cautions proper; they are, indeed, not new, but in a didactick poem novelty is to be expected only in the ornaments and illustrations. His poetical precepts are accompanied with agreeable and instructive notes.

The Mask of Peleus and Thetis has here and there a pretty line; but it is not always melodious, and the conclusion is wretched.

In his British Enchanters he has bidden defiance to all chronology, by confounding the inconsistent manners of different ages; but the dialogue has often the air of Dryden's rhyming plays; and the songs are lively, though not very correct. This is, I think, far the best of his works; for, if it has many faults, it has, likewise, passages which are, at least, pretty, though they do not rise to any high degree of excellence.

YALDEN

THOMAS YALDEN, the sixth son of Mr. John Yalden, of Sussex, was born in the city of Exeter, in 1671. Having been educated in the grammar-school belonging to Magdalen college in Oxford, he was in 1690, at the age of nineteen, admitted commoner of Magdalen hall, under the tuition of Josiah Pullen[x], a man whose name is still remembered in the university. He became, next year, one of the scholars of Magdalen college, where he was distinguished by a lucky accident.

It was his turn, one day, to pronounce a declamation; and Dr. Hough, the president, happening to attend, thought the composition too good to be the speaker's. Some time after, the doctor finding him a little irregularly busy in the library, set him an exercise for punishment; and, that he might not be deceived by any artifice, locked the door. Yalden, as it happened, had been lately reading on the subject given, and produced, with little difficulty, a composition which so pleased the president, that he told him his former suspicions, and promised to favour him.

Among his contemporaries in the college were Addison and Sacheverell, men who were in those

[x] We need not remark to any of our readers, but to those who are not Oxford men, that Pullen's name is now remembered in the university, not as a tutor, but by the venerable elm tree which was the term of his morning walks. "I have the honour to be well known to Mr. Josiah Pullen, of our hall above-mentioned, (Magdalen hall,) and attribute the florid old age I now enjoy to my constant morning walks up Headington hill, in his cheerful company." Guardian, No. 2. Ed.

times friends, and who both adopted Yalden to their intimacy. Yalden continued, throughout his life, to think, as probably he thought at first, yet did not forfeit the friendship of Addison.

When Namur was taken by king William, Yalden made an ode. There was never any reign more celebrated by the poets than that of William, who had very little regard for song himself, but happened to employ ministers who pleased themselves with the praise of patronage.

Of this ode mention is made in a humorous poem of that time, called the Oxford Laureate; in which, after many claims had been made and rejected, Yalden is represented as demanding the laurel, and as being called to his trial, instead of receiving a reward:

> His crime was for being a felon in verse,
> And presenting his theft to the king;
> The first was a trick not uncommon or scarce,
> But the last was an impudent thing:
> Yet what he had stol'n was so little worth stealing,
> They forgave him the damage and cost;
> Had he ta'en the whole ode, as he took it piece-mealing,
> They had fined him but tenpence at most.

The poet whom he was charged with robbing was Congreve.

He wrote another poem on the death of the duke of Gloucester.

In 1700, he became fellow of the college; and next year, entering into orders, was presented by the society with a living in Warwickshire[y], consistent with the fellowship, and chosen lecturer of moral philosophy, a very honourable office.

[y] The vicarage of Willoughby, which he resigned in 1708. N.

On the accession of queen Anne he wrote another poem; and is said, by the author of the Biographia, to have declared himself of the party who had the honourable distinction of high-churchmen.

In 1706, he was received into the family of the duke of Beaufort. Next year he became doctor in divinity, and soon after resigned his fellowship and lecture; and, as a token of his gratitude, gave the college a picture of their founder.

He was made rector of Charlton and Cleanville[z], two adjoining towns and benefices in Hertfordshire; and had the prebends, or sinecures, of Deans, Hains, and Pendles, in Devonshire. He had before[a] been chosen, in 1698, preacher of Bridewell Hospital, upon the resignation of Dr. Atterbury[b].

From this time he seems to have led a quiet and inoffensive life, till the clamour was raised about Atterbury's plot. Every loyal eye was on the watch for abetters or partakers of the horrid conspiracy; and Dr. Yalden, having some acquaintance with the bishop, and being familiarly conversant with Kelly, his secretary, fell under suspicion, and was taken into custody.

Upon his examination he was charged with a dangerous correspondence with Kelly. The correspondence he acknowledged; but maintained that it had no treasonable tendency. His papers were seized;

[z] This preferment was given him by the duke of Beaufort. N.

[a] Not long after.

[b] Dr. Atterbury retained the office of preacher at Bridewell till his promotion to the bishoprick of Rochester. Dr. Yalden succeeded him as preacher, in June, 1713. N.

but nothing was found that could fix a crime upon him, except two words in his pocketbook, "thorough-paced doctrine." This expression the imagination of his examiners had impregnated with treason, and the doctor was enjoined to explain them. Thus pressed, he told them that the words had lain unheeded in his pocketbook from the time of queen Anne, and that he was ashamed to give an account of them; but the truth was, that he had gratified his curiosity one day, by hearing Daniel Burgess in the pulpit, and those words were a memorial hint of a remarkable sentence by which he warned his congregation to "beware of thorough-paced doctrine, that doctrine, which, coming in at one ear, passes through the head, and goes out at the other."

Nothing worse than this appearing in his papers, and no evidence arising against him, he was set at liberty.

It will not be supposed that a man of this character attained high dignities in the church; but he still retained the friendship, and frequented the conversation, of a very numerous and splendid set of acquaintance. He died July 16, 1736, in the 66th year of his age.

Of his poems, many are of that irregular kind, which, when he formed his poetical character, was supposed to be Pindarick. Having fixed his attention on Cowley as a model, he has attempted, in some sort, to rival him, and has written a Hymn to Darkness, evidently as a counterpart to Cowley's Hymn to Light.

This hymn seems to be his best performance, and is, for the most part, imagined with great vigour, and expressed with great propriety. I will not transcribe it. The seven first stanzas are good; but the third, fourth, and seventh, are the best: the eighth seems to involve a contradiction; the tenth is exquisitely beautiful; the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth, are partly mythological, and partly religious, and, therefore, not suitable to each other: he might better have made the whole merely philosophical.

There are two stanzas in this poem where Yalden may be suspected, though hardly convicted, of having consulted the Hymnus ad Umbram of Wowerus, in the sixth stanza, which answers, in some sort, to these lines:

> Illa suo præest nocturnis numine sacris —
> Perque vias errare novis dat spectra figuris,
> Manesque excitos medios ululare per agros
> Sub noctem, et questu notos complere penates.

And again, at the conclusion:

> Illa suo senium secludit corpore toto
> Haud numerans jugi fugientia secula lapsu,
> Ergo ubi postremum mundi compage soluta
> Hanc rerum molem suprema absumpserit hora
> Ipsa leves cineres nube amplectetur opaca,
> Et prisco imperio rursus dominabitur UMBRA.

His Hymn to Light is not equal to the other. He seems to think that there is an East absolute and positive, where the morning rises.

In the last stanza, having mentioned the sudden eruption of new-created light, he says,

> Awhile th' Almighty wond'ring stood.

He ought to have remembered that infinite knowledge can never wonder. All wonder is the effect of novelty upon ignorance.

Of his other poems it is sufficient to say, that they deserve perusal, though they are not always exactly polished, though the rhymes are sometimes very ill sorted, and though his faults seem rather the omissions of idleness than the negligences of enthusiasm.

TICKELL

THOMAS TICKELL, the son of the reverend Richard Tickell, was born, in 1686, at Bridekirk, in Cumberland; and in April, 1701, became a member of Queen's college, in Oxford; in 1708 he was made master of arts; and, two years afterwards, was chosen fellow; for which, as he did not comply with the statutes by taking orders, he obtained a dispensation from the crown. He held his fellowship till 1726, and then vacated it, by marrying, in that year, at Dublin.

Tickell was not one of those scholars who wear away their lives in closets; he entered early into the world, and was long busy in publick affairs; in which he was initiated under the patronage of Addison, whose notice he is said to have gained by his verses in praise of Rosamond.

To those verses it would not have been just to deny regard; for they contain some of the most elegant encomiastick strains; and, among the innumerable poems of the same kind, it will be hard to find one with which they need to fear a comparison. It may deserve observation, that when Pope wrote, long afterwards, in praise of Addison, he has copied, at least has resembled, Tickell.

> Let joy salute fair Rosamonda's shade,
> And wreaths of myrtle crown the lovely maid.
> While now perhaps with Dido's ghost she roves,
> And hears and tells the story of their loves,
> Alike they mourn, alike they bless their fate,
> Since love, which made them wretched, made them great.
> Nor longer that relentless doom bemoan,
> Which gain'd a Virgil and an Addison. TICKELL.

> Then future ages with delight shall see
> How Plato's, Bacon's, Newton's, looks agree;
> Or in fair series laurell'd bards be shown,
> A Virgil there, and here an Addison. POPE.

He produced another piece of the same kind at the appearance of Cato, with equal skill, but not equal happiness.

When the ministers of queen Anne were negotiating with France, Tickell published the Prospect of Peace, a poem, of which the tendency was to reclaim the nation from the pride of conquest to the pleasures of tranquillity. How far Tickell, whom Swift afterwards mentioned as *whiggissimus*, had then connected himself with any party, I know not; this poem certainly did not flatter the practices, or promote the opinions, of the men by whom he was afterwards befriended.

Mr. Addison, however he hated the men then in power, suffered his friendship to prevail over his publick spirit, and gave, in the Spectator, such praises of Tickell's poem, that when, after having long wished to peruse it, I laid hold on it at last, I thought it unequal to the honours which it had received, and found it a piece to be approved rather than admired. But the hope excited by a work of genius, being general and indefinite, is rarely gratified. It was read at that time with so much favour, that six editions were sold.

At the arrival of king George he sang the Royal Progress; which, being inserted in the Spectator, is well known; and of which it is just to say, that it is neither high nor low.

The poetical incident of most importance in Tickell's life was his publication of the first book of the Iliad, as translated by himself, an apparent opposition to Pope's Homer, of which the first part made its entrance into the world at the same time.

Addison declared that the rival versions were both good; but that Tickell's was the best that ever was made; and with Addison, the wits, his adherents and followers, were certain to concur. Pope does not appear to have been much dismayed; "for," says he, "I have the town, that is, the mob, on my side." But he remarks, "that it is common for the smaller party to make up in diligence what they want in numbers; he appeals to the people as his proper judges; and, if they are not inclined to condemn him, he is in little care about the highflyers at Button's."

Pope did not long think Addison an impartial judge; for he considered him as the writer of Tickell's version. The reasons for his suspicion I will literally transcribe from Mr. Spence's collection.

"There had been a coldness (said Mr. Pope) between Mr. Addison and me for some time; and we had not been in company together, for a good while, any where but at Button's coffee-house, where I used to see him almost every day. On his meeting me there, one day in particular, he took me aside, and said he should be glad to dine with me, at such a tavern, if I staid till those people were gone, (Budgell and Philips.) We went accordingly; and, after dinner, Mr. Addison said, 'That

he had wanted for some time to talk with me; that his friend Tickell had formerly, whilst at Oxford, translated the first book of the Iliad; that he designed to print it, and had desired him to look it over; that he must, therefore, beg that I would not desire him to look over my first book, because, if he did, it would have the air of double-dealing.' I assured him that I did not at all take it ill of Mr. Tickell that he was going to publish his translation; that he certainly had as much right to translate any author as myself; and that publishing both was entering on a fair stage. I then added, that I would not desire him to look over my first book of the Iliad, because he had looked over Mr. Tickell's; but could wish to have the benefit of his observations on my second, which I had then finished, and which Mr. Tickell had not touched upon. Accordingly I sent him the second book the next morning; and Mr. Addison, a few days after, returned it, with very high commendations. Soon after it was generally known that Mr. Tickell was publishing the first book of the Iliad, I met Dr. Young in the street; and, upon our falling into that subject, the doctor expressed a great deal of surprise at Tickell's having had such a translation so long by him. He said, that it was inconceivable to him, and that there must be some mistake in the matter; that each used to communicate to the other whatever verses they wrote, even to the least things; that Tickell could not have been busied in so long a work there, without his knowing something of the

matter; and that he had never heard a single word of it till on this occasion. The surprise of Dr. Young, together with what Steele has said against Tickell in relation to this affair, make it highly probable that there was some underhand dealing in that business; and indeed Tickell himself, who is a very fair worthy man, has since, in a manner, as good as owned it to me. [When it was introduced into a conversation between Mr. Tickell and Mr. Pope, by a third person, Tickell did not deny it; which, considering his honour, and zeal for his departed friend, was the same as owning it.'']

Upon these suspicions, with which Dr. Warburton hints that other circumstances concurred, Pope always, in his Art of Sinking, quotes this book as the work of Addison.

To compare the two translations would be tedious; the palm is now given universally to Pope; but I think the first lines of Tickell's were rather to be preferred; and Pope seems to have since borrowed something from them, in the correction of his own.

When the Hanover succession was disputed, Tickell gave what assistance his pen would supply. His letter to Avignon stands high among party-poems; it expresses contempt without coarseness, and superiority without insolence. It had the success which it deserved, being five times printed.

He was now intimately united to Mr. Addison, who, when he went into Ireland as secretary to the lord Sunderland, took him thither, and employed him in publick business; and when, 1717, afterwards

he rose to be secretary of state, made him under-secretary. Their friendship seems to have continued without abatement; for, when Addison died, he left him the charge of publishing his works, with a solemn recommendation to the patronage of Craggs.

To these works he prefixed an elegy on the author, which could owe none of its beauties to the assistance, which might be suspected to have strengthened or embellished his earlier compositions; but neither he nor Addison ever produced nobler lines than are contained in the third and fourth paragraphs; nor is a more sublime or more elegant funeral-poem to be found in the whole compass of English literature.

He was afterwards, about 1725, made secretary to the lords justices of Ireland, a place of great honour; in which he continued till 1740, when he died on the twenty-third of April, at Bath.

Of the poems yet unmentioned, the longest is Kensington Gardens, of which the versification is smooth and elegant, but the fiction unskilfully compounded of Grecian deities and Gothick fairies. Neither species of those exploded beings could have done much; and when they are brought together, they only make each other contemptible. To Tickell, however, cannot be refused a high place among the minor poets; nor should it be forgotten that he was one of the contributors to the Spectator. With respect to his personal character, he is said to have been a man of gay conversation, at least a temperate lover of wine and company, and in his domestick relations without censure.

HAMMOND

OF Mr. Hammond, though he be well remembered as a man esteemed and caressed by the elegant and great, I was at first able to obtain no other memorials than such as are supplied by a book called Cibber's Lives of the Poets; of which I take this opportunity to testify that it was not written, nor, I believe, even seen by either of the Cibbers; but was the work of Robert Shiels, a native of Scotland, a man of very acute understanding, though with little scholastick education, who, not long after the publication of his work, died in London of a consumption. His life was virtuous, and his end was pious. Theophilus Cibber, then a prisoner for debt, imparted, as I was told, his name for ten guineas. The manuscript of Shiels is now in my possession.

I have since found that Mr. Shiels, though he was no negligent inquirer, has been misled by false accounts; for he relates that James Hammond, the author of the elegies, was the son of a Turkey merchant, and had some office at the prince of Wales's court, till love of a lady, whose name was Dashwood, for a time disordered his understanding. He was unextinguishably amorous, and his mistress inexorably cruel.

Of this narrative, part is true, and part false. He was the second son of Anthony Hammond, a man of note among the wits, poets, and parliamentary orators, in the beginning of this century, who was allied to sir Robert Walpole by marrying his sister[c].

[c] This account is still erroneous. James Hammond, our author, was of a different family, the second son of Anthony Hammond, of Somersham-

He was born about 1710, and educated at Westminster-school; but it does not appear that he was of any university[d]. He was equerry to the prince of Wales, and seems to have come very early into publick notice, and to have been distinguished by those whose friendship prejudiced mankind at that time in favour of the man on whom they were bestowed; for he was the companion of Cobham, Lyttelton, and Chesterfield. He is said to have divided his life between pleasure and books; in his retirement forgetting the town, and in his gaiety losing the student. Of his literary hours all the effects are here exhibited, of which the elegies were written very early, and the prologue not long before his death.

In 1741, he was chosen into parliament for Truro, in Cornwall, probably one of those who were elected by the prince's influence; and died next year in June, at Stowe, the famous seat of lord Cobham. His mistress long outlived him, and, in 1779, died unmarried. The character which her lover bequeathed her was, indeed, not likely to attract courtship.

The elegies were published after his death; and while the writer's name was remembered with fondness, they were read with a resolution to admire them.

The recommendatory preface of the editor, who was then believed, and is now affirmed by Dr. Maty, to be the earl of Chesterfield, raised strong prejudices in their favour.

place, in the county of Huntingdon, esq. See Gent. Mag. vol. lvii. p. 780. R.

[d] Mr. Cole gives him to Cambridge. MSS. Athenæ Cantab. in Mus. Brit.

But of the prefacer, whoever he was, it may be reasonably suspected that he never read the poems; for he professes to value them for a very high species of excellence, and recommends them as the genuine effusions of the mind, which expresses a real passion in the language of nature. But the truth is, these elegies have neither passion, nature, nor manners. Where there is fiction, there is no passion: he that describes himself as a shepherd, and his Neæra or Delia as a shepherdess, and talks of goats and lambs, feels no passion. He that courts his mistress with Roman imagery deserves to lose her; for she may, with good reason, suspect his sincerity. Hammond has few sentiments drawn from nature, and few images from modern life. He produces nothing but frigid pedantry. It would be hard to find in all his productions three stanzas that deserve to be remembered.

Like other lovers, he threatens the lady with dying; and what then shall follow?

> Wilt thou in tears thy lover's corse attend;
> With eyes averted light the solemn pyre,
> Till all around the doleful flames ascend,
> Then, slowly sinking, by degrees expire?
>
> To sooth the hov'ring soul be thine the care,
> With plaintive cries to lead the mournful band;
> In sable weeds the golden vase to bear,
> And cull my ashes with thy trembling hand:
>
> Panchaia's odours be their costly feast,
> And all the pride of Asia's fragrant year,
> Give them the treasures of the farthest East,
> And, what is still more precious, give thy tear.

Surely no blame can fall upon the nymph who rejected a swain of so little meaning.

His verses are not rugged, but they have no sweetness; they never glide in a stream of melody. Why Hammond or other writers have thought the quatrain of ten syllables elegiack, it is difficult to tell. The character of the elegy is gentleness and tenuity; but this stanza has been pronounced by Dryden, whose knowledge of English metre was not inconsiderable, to be the most magnificent of all the measures which our language affords.

OF Mr. [e]Somervile's life I am not able to say any thing that can satisfy curiosity.

He was a gentleman whose estate was in Warwickshire: his house, where he was born, in 1692, is called Edston, a seat inherited from a long line of ancestors; for he was said to be of the first family in his county. He tells of himself that he was born near the Avon's banks. He was bred at Winchester-school, and was elected fellow of New college. It does not appear that in the places of his education he exhibited any uncommon proofs of genius or literature. His powers were first displayed in the country, where he was distinguished as a poet, a gentleman, and a skilful and useful justice of the peace.

Of the close of his life, those whom his poems have delighted will read with pain the following account, copied from the letters of his friend Shenstone, by whom he was too much resembled.

"—Our old friend Somervile is dead! I did not imagine I could have been so sorry as I find myself on this occasion: 'Sublatum quærimus.' I can now excuse all his foibles; impute them to age, and to distress of circumstances: the last of these considerations wrings my very soul to think on. For a man of high spirit, conscious of having, at least in one production, generally pleased the world, to be plagued and threatened by wretches that are low in every sense; to be forced to drink himself into pains of

[e] William.

the body, in order to get rid of the pains of the mind, is a misery."

He died July 19, 1742, and was buried at Wotton, near Henley on Arden.

His distresses need not be much pitied: his estate is said to have been fifteen hundred a-year, which, by his death, devolved to lord Somervile, of Scotland. His mother, indeed, who lived till ninety, had a jointure of six hundred.

It is with regret that I find myself not better enabled to exhibit memorials of a writer, who, at least, must be allowed to have set a good example to men of his own class, by devoting part of his time to elegant knowledge; and who has shown, by the subjects which his poetry has adorned, that it is practicable to be at once a skilful sportsman, and a man of letters.

Somervile has tried many modes of poetry; and though, perhaps, he has not in any reached such excellence as to raise much envy, it may commonly be said, at least, that "he writes very well for a gentleman." His serious pieces are sometimes elevated, and his trifles are sometimes elegant. In his verses to Addison, the couplet which mentions Clio is written with the most exquisite delicacy of praise; it exhibits one of those happy strokes that are seldom attained. In his odes to Marlborough there are beautiful lines; but, in the second ode, he shows that he knew little of his hero, when he talks of his private virtues. His subjects are commonly such as require no great depth of thought, or energy of ex-

pression. His fables are generally stale, and, therefore, excite no curiosity. Of his favourite, the Two Springs, the fiction is unnatural, and the moral inconsequential. In his tales there is too much coarseness, with too little care of language, and not sufficient rapidity of narration.

His great work is his Chase, which he undertook in his maturer age, when his ear was improved to the approbation of blank verse, of which, however, his two first lines give a bad specimen. To this poem praise cannot be totally denied. He is allowed, by sportsmen, to write with great intelligence of his subject, which is the first requisite to excellence; and, though it is impossible to interest the common readers of verse in the dangers or pleasures of the chase, he has done all that transition and variety could easily effect; and has, with great propriety, enlarged his plan by the modes of hunting used in other countries.

With still less judgment did he choose blank verse as the vehicle of Rural Sports. If blank verse be not tumid and gorgeous, it is crippled prose; and familiar images, in laboured language, have nothing to recommend them but absurd novelty, which, wanting the attractions of nature, cannot please long. One excellence of the Splendid Shilling is, that it is short. Disguise can gratify no longer than it deceives[f].

[f] An allusion of approbation is made to the above in Nichol's Literary Anecdotes of the eighteenth century, ii. 58. Ed.

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